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THE CAUSE  
OF THE  
PEOPLE OF MALTA  
—  
G. MITROVICH

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1231





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Scic. 1231

THE CAUSE

6600

OF THE

PEOPLE OF MALTA;

NOW BEFORE PARLIAMENT.

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BY GEORGE MITROVICH,

A NATIVE OF MALTA,

ACTING IN LONDON ON BEHALF OF HIS COUNTRYMEN.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE question which forms the subject of the following pages, is not, it is to be understood, one of party, but one which involves the rights of a confiding and oppressed people.

The Maltese, who are faithful and loyal subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, do not come before the British Parliament to ask for new rights and privileges; but for the restitution of those which have been unjustly wrested from them, in direct opposition to the stipulations made at the time of placing their island under British protection, and contrary to the sacred and inviolable promise of His Majesty, communicated to the Maltese in a Proclamation by His Majesty's representative, Sir Charles Cameron, in the month of July 1801, in the following words:—"HIS MAJESTY GRANTS YOU FULL PROTECTION, AND THE ENJOYMENT OF ALL YOUR DEAREST RIGHTS. HAPPY PEOPLE!"



It is earnestly requested that the public will peruse with attention the following incontrovertible statement of facts, and aid their representatives in Parliament in rendering that justice which alone is required by the Maltese.

London, March 31, 1836.

# THE CAUSE

## OF THE

# PEOPLE OF MALTA.

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ON the 31st of July in the last year, in anticipation of a motion that was to be brought forward in the House of Commons, by William Ewart, Esq., member for Liverpool, on the 18th of August following, in order to call the attention of that House to the Island of Malta; I thought proper to publish a pamphlet entitled "The Claims of the Maltese, founded upon the Principles of Justice," so that the British nation might be made acquainted with the state of that island, its form of government, and the treatment it has met with from the Local Authorities since its possession was ceded by the voice of the Maltese to Great Britain.

As the time fixed for this motion was very near the close of a long Parliamentary Session, and consequently not only inconvenient to the House, but also of very little use to the cause itself, it has been thought proper to move only for some returns, and to postpone the motion to the present session.

Mr. Ewart, therefore, having fixed the 17th May next as the day on which he intends to bring the state of Malta before the House, and, as he will present on that day, or thenabout, a petition signed by a considerable number of its inhabitants, including clergy, nobles, and persons of all classes, on the subject of their grievances; and, as

some facts relating to the above-mentioned treatment of the Maltese, as well as to their sacred rights, are not, perhaps, sufficiently known to the British public ; I deem it requisite, under the present circumstances, to give herewith some explanations and details upon those points, so that due consideration may be given, and a proper judgment may be formed, of the wrongs of the Maltese people, and a remedy be afforded for the existing abuses, by entirely changing the system of the Local Government, which is contrary to the interests of the people ; and by establishing a just, constitutional, and paternal form of government, which the Maltese have been praying for during these thirty-five years, and to which, according to stipulations and promises of His Majesty's representatives on his behalf, they are fully and justly entitled.

Three months had scarcely elapsed after Malta, through the treachery of some of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, had become, in 1798, a conquest of the French, when the Maltese, indignant at the proceedings of their new oppressors, who persuaded themselves that they could treat them as a conquered country, broke out in open revolt against them. This remarkable event took place on the 2nd of September of that year. In a few hours every man in the country thought of nothing else but how to provide himself with some sort of weapon, for want of proper arms and ammunition, aiming at the destruction of every thing that was French, for the liberties of his country. It is evident that a contest of such a kind was arduous and unequal, as the insurgents, though very numerous, were unarmed, and had but a very small quantity of provisions, while they had to combat 6000 Frenchmen, with their artillery, and provided with every thing that they could wish for,—nevertheless, they were determined to perish or be free. The French made every effort to appease the people, but in vain ; they made several sallies, but were always beaten back ; and, at last, compelled to remain shut up within the fortifications :



“ they had to combat enraged lions—no trace of the “ Maltese former docile character appeared ” (expressions used by General Vaubois, the French Commandant at Malta, in writing to Ex-Chevalier Fossetti in Alexandria, on the subject of that extraordinary event). The insurgents, for the military department, appointed chiefs and heads of battalions, the principal of whom were the present Bishop Caruana and Mr. V. Borg, still alive, and others, and established their civil government ; their National Council was reinstated, to which they then gave the name of Congress, and which was composed of representatives of the clergy and of the people of the whole country, freely elected. This was a form of government assimilating to that which existed within the Island since the year 1090 (with the exception of short intervals, when the Maltese were under oppression and despotic rulers), when Count Roger, the Norman, liberated their islands from the yoke of the Arabs, after their expulsion from Sicily. They informed the court of Naples of what had happened, and sent boats in search of the British fleet in the Mediterranean. A Portuguese squadron, under the Marquis of Nizza, appeared off Malta on the 18th September. On the 24th of the same month, Sir James Saumarez, returning from Alexandria with part of the British fleet after the memorable battle of the Nile, appeared also off Malta. On the 24th of October, Lord Nelson made also his appearance. He had been preceded by Captain Alexander John Ball, of the ship *Alexander*. They gave to the Maltese assistance in arms and ammunition. Captain Ball was left in charge of the blockading squadron, and was afterwards elected by the Maltese, President of the Congress. This Congress, recognised by the English and the King of Naples, on the 30th December 1799, gave audience to the Chevalier Italin-skoi, as envoy of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, sent to the Maltese nation, who, after the presentation of his credentials, read to the members of the Congress, in their

legal capacity of representatives of the people, a very important address. Captain Ball promised the Maltese the preservation of all their rights and privileges, and the continuance of their ancient laws; and the British flag was hoisted on all the batteries erected by the Maltese on the occasion of the revolt, against the fortifications of Valletta and its surrounding works,—thus placing our islands, ourselves, and our property, under the British protection. The following extract from Captain Ball's letter to Mr. V. Borg, one of the chiefs, will show how the Maltese began to work underhand at an early period, in order to be united to Great Britain, and to become for ever British subjects.

The Alexander, 9th Feb. 1799.

I am of opinion that we must not wound the feelings nor infringe the rights of the King of the Two Sicilies; we must act with delicacy. If at the end of the war, the Maltese and the English are well attached to each other, you may be sure that it will be the interest of the King of Sicily to give up his right for ever.

It was not until after the lapse of sixteen months from the breaking out of the insurrection, during which time the Maltese continued to blockade Valletta by land, without any aid from foreign troops, and attempted several times to take possession of the fortifications by concerted plans, and by storm, in which they suffered severely; that General Graham, now Lord Lynedoch, arrived in Malta with His Majesty's 30th and 89th regiments (1300 strong), who were the first British troops landed in the Island. Soon afterwards some Neapolitan troops (900 strong) also arrived. The following is General Graham's address to the Maltese, which is sufficient to show what their conduct and behaviour were during the siege.

*Address of Brigadier-General Graham to the Maltese in the last year of the siege of Valletta, against the French.*

**BRAVE MALTESE,**—You have rendered yourselves interesting and conspicuous to all the world. History does not present a more surprising example. Given in prey to your invaders, deprived of the means of resistance, an eternal slavery seemed to be your inevitable destiny.—

The oppression and the sacrilege of your tyrants became unsufferable. Without considering the consequences, you determined at any price to vindicate your wrongs; without arms, without the resources of war, you broke in pieces your chains.—Your patriotism, your courage, your religion, supplied all wants. Your energy commanded victory, and enemies, formidable to the best-disciplined troops of Europe, ceded in every point to your matchless efforts, and hid their disgrace behind the ramparts.—The courageous battalions of the towns (*casali*) have ever since confined them there with a vigilance and a patience worthy of the cause of liberty.—You asked assistance. The powers which act in alliance for the support of civil society, and of religion, hastened to your alleviation. Arms, ammunition, money, and corn, were furnished you; their ships have intercepted the succours to your enemies.—My master, Sovereign of a people free and generous, sent me with a handful of men to support you, until an imposing force should be prepared for the reduction of Valletta; but the circumstances of the war have hitherto retarded it: in the mean time, this is a precious moment, and it ought not to be lost.—What then is to be done to profit by so favourable a circumstance? I will anticipate your answer. You are again ready to unite in mass, to complete the glorious work which you began.—To arms then, O Maltese! be the universal cry of the Island; for God and your country! Who is there so deaf to every sentiment of duty and of honour, who will not voluntarily obey such an invitation! None, none, but traitors, or vile time-servers: such we do not desire in our ranks. That infallible voice which shall distinguish with the title of hero every man who exposes himself for his country, will equally imprint on the names of those traitors indelible infamy.—Abandon, then, for a few weeks the exercise of your accustomed industry. Put yourselves under the immediate direction of *your own officers*, and under their guidance; their skill and experience in their profession will conduct you, with the utmost advantage, to the great and important object of the *final conquest* of your enemies.—A weak and dispirited garrison, disproportioned to the defence of such extensive works, cannot resist your efforts: success will recompense your labour, and you will return instantly into the bosom of your families, proud, justly proud, of having saved your country.

THOS. GRAHAM,  
Brig.-General, commanding  
the allied troops at the  
blockade of Valletta.

At the head-quarters at GUDIA,  
the 19th June, 1800.

General Pigot, with a few more British troops, comprising H. M. 48th Regt., and two battalions of the 35th, arrived a little before the capitulation, and took the command of all the allied troops in the Island. The French



being reduced to the last extremity, in the month of September 1800 offered to capitulate. To know in what manner the Maltese have been treated, and their interests sacrificed in the capitulation granted to the French by Gen. Pigot, we have only to quote the following extract from their memorial to His Majesty in October 1801 :—

The French garrison, reduced to the last extremity from want of provisions, offered to capitulate, and to leave hostages for the payment of the large sums which they had taken from the public treasury ; from the Università (or public fund belonging to the Maltese for the furnishing the Island with corn) ; from the Monte di Pietà (where individuals pledged their effects) ; from churches, by forced loans from private persons.

The situation of the French garrison was known to the British General, as well as to all the Maltese : in two days it must have surrendered at discretion. There were found only a few salms (a salm is about an English quarter) of wheat, and no other provisions, in Valletta when it surrendered.

Major-General Pigot, however, granted the garrison a capitulation without consulting or even informing the Maltese, without naming them, or stipulating one article in their favour, by which the French were allowed to carry with them their effects ; and accordingly, before they gave up their posts, they plundered the inhabitants of Valletta of their remaining money, jewels, and effects, and carried them on board vessels, which conveyed to France the spoils of a victorious people.

The foreign troops were only auxiliaries (as the proclamation of the British Generals prove) : the Maltese were the principals ; the Maltese had conquered the whole Island except Valletta, before they received any foreign assistance whatever.

The British troops took possession of the place, and caused the Maltese to lay down their arms on the glacis before they entered the town.

The Maltese, without suspicion, and relying on the good faith of the British nation, gave up the government of their country into the hands of the British Generals without contradiction, obeying them with fidelity and submission, as ministers of the Sovereign their hearts had elected.

They forbear to make any comment on the manner, they have been treated, because they are fully persuaded that it will be disavowed with horror and contempt by the King's Ministers.

As soon as the British troops took possession of the fortifications, and the vicissitudes of the war were over, the vigilance of the Maltese was no longer necessary, and

the danger to which they had been always exposed during the two years of the blockade, in which they lost several thousands of their countrymen, while the British troops had not one single soldier killed by the enemy, no longer existed ; Sir Alexander Ball, to the surprise and indignation of the whole population, suspended the Congress, and told the Maltese that the administration of the Civil Government should rest temporarily solely with him. Instead of their ancient laws, by which they were then governed, he adopted the code of Rohan, detested by the Maltese, as it had already destroyed some of their privileges (which code is in force in the Island to the present day), notwithstanding his own solemn promises and stipulations with the Maltese, as can clearly be seen by the following important extract from his own letter, printed in Malta, at his own press, addressed to Mr. Secretary Windham, and dated 28th February, 1807.

**“ YOU ARE AWARE, SIR, THAT WHEN THE BRITISH FIRST TOOK POSSESSION OF THE ISLAND, IT WAS STIPULATED THAT THE PRIVILEGES OF THE MALTESE SHOULD BE PRESERVED, AND THEIR ANCIENT LAWS CONTINUED. —(THEY WERE THEN, N. B., GOVERNED BY THEIR ANCIENT LAWS.”)**

By the foregoing statement the British public may discover breach of faith and ingratitude on the occasion of the capitulation ; breach of faith and perfidy immediately after the capitulation !

Thus, after two years of war and of a rigorous blockade, in which the Maltese behaved with prodigious bravery and patriotism, aided the views and the interests of Great Britain in a war against her strongest enemy, and mortgaged their lands to procure corn from Sicily ; in which their sufferings and privations were extreme, epidemic disease raged amongst them, and misery and famine were felt by every class of the inhabitants ; a war, in which they lost above 20,000 of their countrymen, and sacrificed

several millions of scudis, they had cherished the hope that the moment had arrived when they could enjoy the fruit of their labour and the blessings of freedom. The above conduct of the British officers will show whether the hopes entertained by the Maltese have been realized, and the following facts will be sufficient to prove whether the load of their chains was afterwards augmented or diminished.

It is to be observed, that to the first stipulations, some new promises were added. General Pigot, on the departure of Sir A. Ball in 1801, addressed the Maltese as follows :—

*General Pigot, Commander of the Troops, and Representative of His Britannic Majesty, to the Inhabitants of Malta and Gozo.*

In the act of addressing you for the first time, it is with the greatest pleasure I have to inform you that his Majesty takes the Maltese nation under his protection. He has authorized me, as his representative, to inform you, that every possible means shall be used to make you contented and happy.

Since I have been amongst you, I have received the best impressions of your good dispositions, and subordination to the laws; and of your gratitude to Divine Providence, under whose favour the fleets and army of the King were enabled to give an effective assistance to your brave exertions for the expulsion of your enemies; through which your peace and liberty are re-established. It shall be my constant care to render certain the continuance of this happiness; you will know that this good cannot come but through a just and exact administration of the laws on the part of the governing, and a constant obedience and confidence in their protection on the part of the people.

This, with due reverence to your holy religion and its ministers, and with reciprocal good faith, must form the grand basis of your happiness.

The Marine Service, to which your former chief belongs, and in which he has always been distinguished, does not permit him to remain longer with you; the unremitting attention which he has always paid to your interests, entitles him to your warmest gratitude. In his absence you may assure yourselves that no suspension of the laws or of the administration of Government shall take place; the tribunals of justice are established, and shall continue. And it is my duty, as well as my inclination, to protect the Maltese nation, and to ensure to them the full possession of their RELIGION, their PROPERTY, and their LIBERTY.

H. PIGOT.

Palace, Valletta, 19th February, 1801.



Sir Charles Cameron on his arrival soon afterwards, as civil commissioner, issued the following proclamation, through which His Majesty's instructions and sacred promise to the Maltese have been solemnly communicated to them. The expressions used by His Majesty's representative in the name of his Sovereign can never be made void, and are impressed on the minds and in the hearts of all the Maltese. His Majesty's governors in Malta, who succeeded the benevolent and much beloved Sir Charles Cameron, and who acted in violation of such a solemn promise made to a confiding and loyal people, such as the Maltese, will, no doubt, be considered by the British nation not only as unjust, but also as unworthy to have the charge of ruling over a people of that description, who deserve a very different fate, better treatment than that which they afterwards met with.

*Mr. Cameron's Proclamation on taking Possession of the  
Government of Malta.*

**TO THE MALTESE NATION.**—Charged by his Majesty, the King of Great Britain, to conduct all the affairs (except the military) of these islands of Malta and Gozo, with the title of his Majesty's Civil Commissioner, I embrace, with the highest satisfaction, this opportunity of assuring you of the paternal care and affection of the King towards you; and that **HIS MAJESTY GRANTS YOU FULL PROTECTION, AND THE ENJOYMENT OF ALL YOUR DEAREST RIGHTS.** He will protect your churches, your holy religion, your persons, and your property.

His paternal care extends to the hospitals and other charitable establishments; to the education of youth, to orphans, to the poor, and to all those who recur to his beneficence.

Happy people! whom the hand of God has saved from the horrible misery and oppression under which groan so many innocent nations! receive with gratitude all this goodness from a King, who is the father of his subjects; who protects the weak against the strong; the poor against the rich; under whose dominion all are equally protected by the law.

Hitherto you have conducted yourselves with decorum and submission to the legitimate authorities; and your ancient fame in arms has not been tarnished by the defence which you lately made of your country.

Commerce being now extended, the arts and sciences encouraged, manufactures and agriculture supported, and industry rewarded, Malta

will become the emporium of the Mediterranean, and the seat of content.

To execute such gracious commands of my Sovereign is not less my ardent desire, than it is my sacred duty. My door shall be open to all; I will hear every one's plea; I shall be ready to render justice; to cause the law to be observed, tempering it with clemency; and to receive every information which shall have for its object the welfare of the Maltese; and, above all, I shall devote myself to the means of promoting the cultivation and manufacture of cotton, and of introducing and maintaining plenty in these islands.

CHARLES CAMERON.

Palace, July 15th, 1801.

Sir Charles Cameron was only allowed to govern Malta about one year. This was a great misfortune to the people of that island. He was replaced by Sir Alexander Ball, who had just returned to the island.

It is impossible to express the feeling and the anger of the Maltese when news arrived in Malta that the preliminaries of the peace of Amiens had been signed, by which our islands were intended to be restored to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. A deputation, composed of six persons, was immediately sent to England, with a memorial from the Maltese, for the purpose of laying at the foot of His Majesty's throne the *voice and the fervent desires* of the people of Malta, protesting against such a restitution, and declaring their intention of never submitting to it, the wishes and the determination of that people being to remain for ever united to the British empire. I have already extracted some passages from this memorial on the occasion of the capitulation; I now extract some others regarding the restitution.

With respect to the Order of St. John, the Island was ceded to them by the Emperor Charles V. as a fief, and as a place for them to maintain their troops, to make continual war against the infidels. Our ancestors submitted reluctantly, but with the express condition however, that in the possession of the Order they should still enjoy their privileges.

As to the landed property the Knights had acquired in the Island, it is contrary to the stipulations, and it has been obtained by usurpation of private property; and a great part of the fortifications and public

buildings were raised with the money of the Maltese, by taxes or duties imposed on them for the purpose, declaring the object and the destination of the produce of such taxes. The Università, the Monte di Pietà, and many other institutions, are entirely Maltese private property, and never belonged to the Order.

The Maltese have other claims to the sovereignty of their own Island, without recurring to the arguments made use of by some writers, that, when a throne becomes vacant, the people have a right to name their own sovereign. They claim their own independence by having twice purchased the Island, and paid the price stipulated to the Kings of Spain and Sicily.

The Maltese also allege that they, as principals in the war, were the captors; that every species of public property is theirs.

In fine, the Maltese claim the Island by right of conquest from the French, who had by right of conquest acquired it from the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

Feeling our own political weakness, and putting a boundless confidence in the sincerity of the British Government, and the faith of the British nation, we rather wished to become subjects of the King, and enjoy all the advantages of free subjects, to a monarch who is the father of all his people, than to assert and maintain our own entire independence; but never can we believe, that abusing of our confidence, and violating all the laws of justice, human and divine, we are to be forcibly delivered over by our auxiliary allies as a conquered nation, or, as vile slaves, sold for a political consideration to new masters, and to masters whose tyranny, extortion, and sacrilege, have rendered them the execration of every virtuous individual, and to whom, whatever misery may ensue, we will never submit. Excluded from the fortress, almost without arms and ammunition, without provisions, and absolutely without any foreign alliance or promise of assistance, our brave islanders resolved to perish or be free; the whole country rose, armed mostly with utensils of agriculture, and expelled the French from every post, except the fortification of Valletta, and kept them blockaded, repulsing every sortie made by the enemy. They mortgaged their lands to procure corn from Sicily. While the British fleet blockaded the Great Harbour, the islanders defended every other inlet, until Valletta surrendered.

Is it to be expected that such a people will deliver up their rights to such masters? We may be free—we may perish; but we never will submit! From whose hands will Divine Justice require their blood? On whose head will fall the vengeance of Heaven, which will be called down by our fathers, our innocent babes, and our venerable priests, in the hour of death?

O Britannia! hitherto the envy and the terror of tyrants, the protectress of liberty and of the oppressed! May thy head, radiant with glory, never be struck with a bolt from the unerring hand of Him who gives and who takes back crowns.

What could the people of Malta do more than they did in order to become subjects of the crown of Great Britain ! Notwithstanding the wrongs which they had received on the occasion of the capitulation and the breach of faith in the form of government imposed on them by Sir A. Ball, they continued to struggle, and to use all their endeavours for the object they had in view, which object was nothing less than that of causing the British nation to become mistress of a place like Malta, whose strength, harbours, and position, command the Mediterranean. The British nation will see from what follows what recompense the Maltese had for all their labours, and the unbounded confidence they at the same time reposed upon the honour of the British officers.

From the following letter it will be seen that the British Government intended to give to the Maltese a form of Government agreeable to their wishes.

*Extract of a Letter from Lord Hawkesbury to Sir John Warren, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, dated Downing-street, Jan. 29th, 1803.*

Lord Hawkesbury, in transmitting His Majesty's instructions to Sir John Warren, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, relative to the stipulations in favour of the Maltese inhabitants in the re-establishment at Malta of the order of St. John, at the treaty of Amiens, says :—

It is important that your Excellency should impress the Russian Government with the conviction of the services rendered by the inhabitants of Malta to His Majesty and to the common cause, at the time when the French were in possession of the island ; that, for nearly two years, they maintained a state of constant and active hostility against the French ; that several thousands of them perished in this state of hostility ; and that these efforts were made at a time when they could receive assistance from no other foreign power ; that the attachment evinced by the Maltese to His Majesty during the blockade, and their loyalty to him since he has obtained possession of the island, give them a peculiar claim to his protection, and a right to expect, that, in the future arrangements for the island, some advantages should be stipulated in their favour ; that, independent of every consideration of good

faith, your Excellency well knows that the Maltese inhabitants, if attached to their Government, are equal to the defence of the island; and that every motive of policy therefore, as well as of justice, renders it expedient to endeavour to conciliate their affections.

And, in speaking about the Maltese *langue* (or the Maltese national branch of the Order of St. John) then intended to be established, continued to say,—

And it may be proposed to revive, under such regulations and modifications as may be judged expedient, the national council which formerly existed in that island, which should form no part of the order, but which should have a share in the government of the island, and a deliberative voice in all its internal concerns. A body of this description could not be considered as in any respect derogatory to the ancient institution of the order, and would be conformable to what existed within the island till within a very few years. It is for the purpose of obtaining information on these points, that instructions will be sent to Sir Alexander Ball; it being impossible, after all that has passed, to bring the negotiation to an issue, without some communication with the principal inhabitants of Malta.

Lord Melville's speech in the House of Lords, on the 23rd of May 1803, shows not only how great the importance of Malta is to Great Britain, but also the decided opinion of the House on the benefit of retaining that island for ever, and of establishing a form of government according to the wishes of its inhabitants. The following is extracted from that speech.

Now indeed he (Lord Melville) was at liberty to contemplate the possibility of realizing an object of so much importance as the settlement of Malta under British protection. Well did he remember the melancholy moments he had passed, when, after reading the definitive treaty (Amiens) he found Malta exposed to so much danger of falling into the hands of a power that would employ it for our destruction. The importance of that island had long appeared to him to be very great, and Europe had in the most decisive instances witnessed it. By means of Malta it was that the French had attacked and made themselves masters of Egypt. By Malta it was that we had been enabled to recover that possession. If Malta remained in our hands, it was impossible that all the efforts of France, that all the armaments she could send forth, could obtain possession of Egypt, while we, with a superior navy, had the opportunity of availing ourselves of the harbours of Malta. Malta, therefore, was to be considered as of infinite importance to the strengthening and security of our empire in India. He considered it as a great tower erected in the Mediterranean, on which the flag

of Great Britain, displayed and floating, would hold forth an invitation to the people of the Mediterranean, of the Adriatic, and of the Levant seas, to rally round it, and to avail themselves of the protection of this country. As we were now going to war, and as Malta formed one of the main objects of the war, he wished that its value should be fully understood, and that we should likewise keep in view the necessity of availing ourselves of its advantages to the utmost. It was evident how great interests depended upon the retention of Malta; were we then to give up that possession which was so essential to those interests? If, then, we were going to war for Malta, it was an object to animate the courage and reward the achievements of our fleets and armies. We should go to war, therefore, upon this ground as a broad question both of right and of general policy. In this view it was matter of congratulation that Malta was to be considered as a British object. It was to be considered that we went to the aid of the Maltese, previously engaged in the reduction of the French. We ought therefore to secure to the Maltese a wise and suitable form of civil government, to be enjoyed by them under the protection of the British power. This object ought to be prosecuted and settled without any delay, so that whenever any new negotiation should be set on foot, we might be enabled to say that the people of Malta, under a form of government agreeable to their wishes, were now established under the protection of Great Britain. He wished it to be understood that he considered the retention of Malta for ever to be a most essential object, and one to which, in the relative circumstances of France and this country, we were fully entitled to prosecute by war. In voting for the address, we therefore voted our concurrence in the war, of which that was the principal object. The attainment of it would be of the utmost benefit to all the states of the Levant, and under our protection alone, Malta could be rendered independent and happy.

It is impossible to express how the Maltese were pleased at the rupture of the peace of Amiens, when their hopes were renewed with a great degree of certainty of remaining united to the British empire, regardless of all the advantages held out to them by the treaty in admitting a langue in the order composed of Maltese without proofs of nobility being requisite, together with other privileges.

The procrastination, however, in establishing the intended good government in the Island gave rise to some uneasiness and anxiety amongst the population, and also to a series of correspondence between the Maltese and their agents in this country. The following documents



are worthy of insertion here for the information of the British nation :—

*Declaration of Rights of the Inhabitants of the Islands of  
Malta and Gozo.*

Malta, 15th June, 1802.

We, the Members of the Congress of the Islands of Malta and Gozo and their dependencies, by the free suffrage of the people, during the siege, elected to represent them on the important matter of ascertaining our native rights and privileges (enjoyed from time immemorial by our ancestors, who, when encroached upon, have shed their blood to regain them), and of fixing a constitution of Government, which shall secure to us and our descendants in perpetuity, the blessings of freedom and the rights of just law, under the protection and sovereignty of the King of a free people, His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. After long and mature deliberation, we make the following declaration, binding ourselves and our posterity for ever, on condition that our now acknowledged Prince and Sovereign shall, on his part, fulfil and keep inviolate his compact with us.

1st. That the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland is our Sovereign Lord, and his lawful successors shall, in all times to come, be acknowledged as our lawful Sovereigns.

2nd. That his said Majesty has no right to cede these Islands to any power. That if he chooses to withdraw his protection, and abandon his sovereignty, the right of electing another sovereign, or of governing these Islands belongs to us, the inhabitants and aborigines alone, and without control.

3rd. That his Majesty's governors or representatives in these Islands and their dependencies are, and shall ever be, bound to observe and keep inviolate the Constitution, which with the sanction and ratification of his said British Royal Majesty, or his representative or plenipotentiary, shall be established by us, composing the General Congress, elected by the people, in the following proportion, viz. :

Cities.—Notabile and Casal Dingli, 14 members: Valletta, 12; Vittoriosa, 4; Senglea, 4; Cospicua, 4.

Casals or Burghs.—Birchircara, 6 members; Attard, 3; Lia and Balzan, 3; Curmi (also a city), 12; Nasciar, 4; Gregorio, 3; Musta, 5; Zebbug (also a city), 8; Siggieui, 4; Luca, 3; Gudia, 1; Zurico, 4; Micabiba, 2; Crendi, 2; Zabbar, 3; Tarshien, 2; Hasciach, 1.

Total Members—104.

4th. That the people of Malta, Gozo, and their representatives in Popular Council assembled, have a right to send letters, or deputies, to the foot of the throne, to represent and to complain of violation of rights and privileges, or of acts contrary to the constitution of the Government, or of the spirit thereof.

5th. That the right of legislation and taxation belongs to the Consiglio Popolare, with the consent and assent of his Majesty's representative, without which the people are not bound.

6th. That His Majesty the King is the protector of our holy religion, and is bound to uphold and protect it as heretofore; and without any diminution of what has been practised since these Islands have acknowledged His Majesty as their Sovereign to this day; and that His Majesty's representatives have a right to claim such church honours as have always been shown to the regents of these Islands.

7th. The interference in matters spiritual or temporal of no other temporal sovereign shall be permitted in these Islands; and reference in spiritual matters shall only be had to the Pope, and to the respective Generals of the Monastic Orders.

8th. That freemen have a right to choose their own religion. Toleration of other religions is therefore established as a right; but no sect is permitted to molest, insult, or disturb those of other religious professions.

9th. That no man whatsoever has any personal authority over the lives, property, or liberty of another. Power resides *only in the law*; and restraint, or punishment, can only be exercised in *obedience to law*.

Signed by all the Representatives, Deputies, and Lieutenants of the Villages and Towns.

*Extracted from the Instructions given to John Richards, Esq., Agent for the Maltese.*

Malta, 25th Feb 1806.

The people of Malta and Gozo have been a free people from the remotest times to which their history or tradition extends; that is to say, they have been governed by written laws, put into execution by magistrates of their own electing; and no person of any rank or office whatever, had authority to exercise any legislative or executive function of his own will or power, farther than what the law ordained.

There existed, from the same antiquity, in the islands, a permanent Consiglio Popolare, or popular assembly, to which appertained the legislative authority, and the watching over the executive powers.

When the Emperor Charles V. (in violation of all the rights of the Maltese nation, and the solemn treaties of his ancestors) ceded their islands to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, that monarch stipulated with the grand-master and the knights, that the Maltese should enjoy all their ancient privileges, and be governed by their own laws; and that they should have a right to appeal, on all grievances, to their lord suzerain, or protector, the Sovereign of Sicily or Spain.

Every grand-master (even the last, Hompech), before he was admitted to take possession of the government, took an oath upon the holy Gospel and the cross, to maintain, inviolate, all the Maltese privileges, and in particular their popular assembly. Yet, in process of time, the

members of this council were mostly illegally nominated by the grandmasters, and few were elected by the people. In 1775 this assembly was wholly abolished.

When the Maltese, unsupported by any foreign aid, or promise of assistance, took up arms, defeated the French, and held them blockaded in Valletta, they re-established the *Consiglio Popolare*, under the name of a Congress. Captain Ball abolished this assembly by his own authority; and the people submitted to his act, in the hope that they would be ruled by a form of government to be sent from England, uniting the essential parts of their ancient government with the English constitution. They the more readily submitted to a temporary suspension of the Congress, as upon this occasion they had stipulated with the King's officers, expressly and in the most solemn manner, that they should be put in possession of all their ancient rights and privileges, not diminished, but augmented.

The people of Malta entreated Mr. Cameron to re-establish the *Consiglio Popolare*; and when the news of a peace with France arrived, they informed him that they considered the Congress, which had been elected during the siege of Valletta, as still in office, and drew up a specific declaration of their rights. They pressed on him very strongly the justice and necessity of establishing this order of things before the arrival of their ancient tyrants, to whom they considered themselves sold for a political consideration.

On the 13th June, 1803, during the government of Sir Alexander Ball, a letter was sent to General Graham, entreating him to present to His Britannic Majesty's Ministry their request, that the Popular Assembly should be re-instated. The same day was sent to General Graham a ratification of his appointment, as agent for the Maltese, which office he had accepted from the deputies sent to England. On the 3rd July, 1803, General Graham was again written to; and he was requested, in case the King's Ministers did not grant their petition, to represent their case to his Majesty in Council. All these letters were signed by the whole of the representatives, and the twenty-two *loco tenenti*, or lieutenant-governors of towns.

In consequence of their never having received any answer, or any redress whatever, or having any channel authorized by the British Government to represent their grievances, the nobility and principal inhabitants are plunged into a state of despondency; and fearful of some violent commotion among the body of the people, as was threatened in the time of General Pigot.

Furthermore, the Maltese represent, that during the present unlimited despotism under which they groan, no man dares to speak his sentiments, much less to send any more representations to England with signatures.

With respect to the tyranny of their government, they beg leave to

represent, that no proofs of acts of despotism and injustice need be produced; that there is internal, incontrovertible evidence to be found in the code of laws by which they are governed, as it establishes an absolute power over life and property in the hands of him who governs. The grand-masters were, according to the instrument which put the Order of St. John in possession of Malta, only the first magistrates. In process of time, by gradually encroaching upon the Maltese privileges, they became despotic sovereigns. The abominable code of Rohan, in which no limitation is put to the power of the grand-master, was an edict issued by him, without any other authority than the despotic exercise of an usurped power.

His Britannic Majesty commanded that the laws of Malta should continue in force. This we understood to be the legal form of government, and not a confirmation of this usurped despotism under which the Maltese have so long groaned, and to free themselves from which they so often struggled, and even appealed to arms as in 1775.

This form of government was, however, re-introduced by Captain Sir Alexander Ball, on the surrender of Valletta, and it has continued to this day.

*Appeals of the Nobility and People of Malta. To the Illustrious John Richards, Esq., our elected Agent, empowered to act for us, and in our name, with his Majesty's Ministers.*

Sir,—On the present occasion, we, the undersigned, renew our warmest entreaties, that you will repeat your applications to the Ministers of the King, our elected Sovereign, that we may at length obtain the restitution of our dearest ancient rights, so often promised to us, the obtaining of which will inspire the hearts of a whole people with gratitude, fidelity, and love. His Majesty will thus reign over a people, the most faithfully attached to his Crown, and ever ready to defend our islands.

We are not a turbulent people; nor have we, in times past, ever expressed our discontent without the strongest reason; our patience, submission, and confidence, in the justice of his Majesty, for the last ten years, are arguments of *facts*, not of *words*, and ought to confound our calumniators.

Our demands (of which you have the details) may be reduced to the restitution of our ancient sacred rights, violated by the latter grand-masters of the Order of St. John—enjoyed by us during the siege of Valletta—*expressly stipulated* when, with unlimited confidence, we delivered up our islands to the King's officers—afterwards taken from us—and again solemnly promised us in the name of the King, by his representative, Mr. Cameron.

The principal of these rights are:

1st. A free representation of the people, or Consiglio Popolare, with

- the power of sending deputies, or memorials to His Majesty in Council, whenever our rights are found to be injured.
- 2nd. Independent tribunals.
- 3rd. A press free, but not licentious, nor offensive to religion.
- 4th. Trial by Jury; either in the manner practised in England, or according to our own ancient usage, which was an appeal in every case from the sentence of the Judges to the Consiglio Popolare.

In fine, a constitution which shall unite the spirit of our ancient, free, and only legitimate government, with that of the English constitution; our religion always being kept inviolate.

For the purpose of securing our ancient rights, we elected for our Sovereign His Majesty the King of Great Britain. In the name of justice, of humanity, of all laws, human and divine, and by the lives of twenty thousand persons lost during the siege of Valletta, we beg you to employ all your credit and energy to have the rights and privileges of the Maltese taken into consideration. According to these rights, our ancient Sovereigns could not impose on us any form of government without our own consent—a consent which cannot be dispensed with without the violation of justice, and which violation we are far from expecting from a government so cordially elected by us.

Malta, this 28th day of Feb. 1810.

(Signatures.)

The despotism of Sir Alexander Ball exercised in the Island of Malta during his administration, without entering into any other particulars, which would be too long and tedious to detail here, may be seen from the following letter of one of the principal chiefs of the Maltese to John Richards, Esq., their agent in London.

Malta, 15th June, 1808.

Sir,—It was useless for me to undertake to place my country under the protection of Great Britain, since I have suffered under Sir Alexander Ball the most flagrant injustice that was ever known in this island, either from the most despotic grand-masters of the Order, or even during the usurped power of the French themselves, against the just rights of the people.

My delinquency has been nothing more in the heart of Sir Alexander Ball than a strong jealousy that he had conceived of several things done during the government of his Excellency Mr. Cameron, and in particular on account of the deputation of the Maltese to London.

What has been done to me has made such an impression on those in the least dependent on him, or who hope for his favour, that with their eyes shut they will sign any eulogium which he may require. Were they to refuse, like me, they would be deprived of their property.

It was by the expenditure of my money that Great Britain became possessed of the revenues of the island, as of all the immense public property. Under these circumstances is it not just that I should be paid my capital and interest? I can never believe that so great and rich a nation can want my money. I can lose all my labours and sufferings with patience; but to lose my property also, is an injustice that never was heard of in the world. If the French had gained the cause, I could but have lost my all! but I hope I shall not fare so ill under the English Government. I have only written the strict truth, and what is well known to be public.

I do not care that Sir Alexander Ball, with power in his hands, and by political intrigue, has procured some false attestations against me, while I am quite certain that the truth will be discovered, not only of all this, but of a great deal more. I very well know that the Minister will go by substantial proofs, and not by such attestations as are extorted by fear, and the result of intrigue.

The Minister will consider that all depends on Sir Alexander Ball's will; employments, pensions, lawsuits in the tribunals, and every thing else. Who will dare to refuse his signature rather than fall into disgrace?

I have written several times to the Minister, but I obtain no remedy. Either my papers have not been received, or not attended to by the Minister; for which reason I pray you, Sir, to present this my letter to the King in Council, in my name, or to Parliament. I don't know the practice in such cases in your country, but I pray you to present this letter to the highest personages, that I, who am weak, may find justice against a powerful person; and I desire you to consign also the copies of all my attestations and papers (if they are come to your hands) to the King in Council, or where you think best, and to write me an answer to this letter, with a decision about my money, whether it will be paid or lost, that I may regulate the interests of my family. I do not make any further appeal to the Minister which might not be attended to. I prefer the reliance which I place on you.

With the most profound respect,

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most humble, obedient and faithful servant,

VINCENZO BORT.

To John Richards, Esq.,  
No. 38, Red Lion-square.

In 1811, a regular and respectful petition, signed by almost all the nobility and other respectable inhabitants in the island, authorized by Lord Liverpool himself, then Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, through



instructions given to the before-named Mr. Richards, was sent to His Majesty.

I leave the British public to judge of the manner in which the subscribers to this petition have been treated by the Governor, then General Oakes, who on that occasion lost his popularity, having made use of expressions unbecoming a representative of so great a Sovereign as the King of Great Britain, in a printed publication, stuck up in all public places ; and having deprived some of the subscribers of their situations to the present day ; among whom mention may be made of the Chevalier Parisio, a member of one of the first families in the Island, whose conduct during the siege was distinguished by the approbation of his countrymen and of all the British commanders, which led to his appointment to the command of one of the Maltese provincial battalions. The following is the petition above alluded to, and an extract of a few expressions from the publication in question :

*To His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.*

An humble petition. We the native inhabitants of Malta, the faithful subjects of Your Majesty, our chosen and benign Sovereign.

Urged by the many distressing facts, which have occurred in our island during the last ten years ; so completely at variance, with the high opinion which the public holds of the English character ; and so very different from what we ourselves experienced during the blockade of Valletta, we humbly presume to lay our complaints at the foot of Your Majesty's throne.

That extraordinary confidence through which we showed our perfect attachment to your Majesty's Government, and resigned ourselves and our country into the hands of your Majesty's officers, though ample authority remained with us to act otherwise, raised in our minds the strongest hopes and expectations that we would meet in return with a corresponding, just, and friendly treatment : but we grieve to say, that we find ourselves fatally deluded in those hopes we fondly indulged in, and that we are made to feel, that our most sacred rights and dearest interests have been sacrificed, to gratify the views of a sordid policy. A most injurious capitulation was concluded between the officers of your Majesty, and those of the French republic shut up in garrison

within the city of Valetta, without the slightest information, or participation on our part, or on that of our chiefs; and an unjust and unnecessary sacrifice made of our substance, and the property of individuals.

We were, through representations to our chiefs, by them induced to the abandonment of our arms in the country, at the same time that our reduced and humbled enemies were forced to lay down their arms in the city. And with the most galling and heart-rending displeasure which can well be imagined were we made to witness our enemies loaded with the spoils of our unfortunate nation; exulting with unrestrained joy and festivity, insulting the universal desolation which our entire nation suffered, through mortality, privation, and most undescribable fatigue and labour, for more than two whole years, under and before the walls of the city of Valetta.

Notwithstanding the most solemn promises and assurances made to our Chiefs and ourselves, by the representative of your Majesty, Sir Alexander Ball, the privilege and rights of our Popular Council were suspended and suppressed, though it was fully promised that it should be again re assembled whenever necessity required that such should take place. This increased the unhappiness of our unfortunate situation; this immediately followed after the surrender of Valetta, and immediately after that period were we made to feel the effects of this suppression.

The most respectable, the most influential, the most honourable of our community, were unjustly oppressed; the most just and reasonable memorials were left without answer. Underhand and oppressive violation was used against the magisterial authority, sudden and entire removal of magistrates took place at the caprice of His Excellency without any form of justice.

To serve private views, deputations composed of a few were formed, some of those foreigners, without any legitimate formation, which issued notices in the name of the nation, and with the approbation of some past royal commissioners, giving possession for profane purposes of localities which had been consecrated by our forefathers for the exercises of our devotion, and the education of our youth; aggravations and insults, which only the terror created by Sir A. Ball, and the distance we are at from your Majesty, have prevented for such a length of time from being properly represented.

False imputations have been thrown out to stain our national character, by representing us as a turbulent people; imputations which are disproved by the ample privileges bestowed on us by our ancient sovereigns, and by our patient suffering and confidence in the justice of your Majesty's government, during the last ten years. Finally, there are many other facts and acts of injustice which our prudence has kept concealed, but in proof of which there are abundant documents in the

hands of Mr. John Richards, our agent in London. All these form the sum of our misfortunes, and we hope sufficiently justify us for having suspicions and fears for the future.

To dissipate therefore our fears and suspicions, and to increase those ardent ties of attachment which bind us and our countrymen to the throne of your Majesty, we supplicate that your Majesty will be pleased to take our case into your royal consideration, and look favourably on our petition, so that we may obtain the restitution of our rights so repeatedly promised in your name, that the hearts of a loyal and faithful people may be filled with joy towards your crown to defend our island.

Our requests in general terms are reduced to the restitution of our ancient and most sacred rights, violated by the latter grand-masters of the Order of St. John, enjoyed by us during the entire period of the blockade of Valletta; expressly stipulated for, when with unbounded good faith we consigned our islands into the hands of your Majesty's officers, which were again torn from us by your Majesty's representative, Sir A. Ball, and in your royal name promised us by your representative, Mr. Charles Cameron.

The first and principal of our rights, is our Popular Council, or a free representation of the people, with the power of sending deputies or memorials to your Majesty whenever our rights are found to be injured.

2nd. Independent tribunals.

3rd. A press free, but not licentious nor offensive in whatever relates to our holy Catholic religion.

4th. Trial by jury, either in the manner practised in England, or according to our own ancient usage, which was an appeal in every case from the sentence of the Judges to the Consiglio Popolare.

Fifth and lastly, we supplicate for a constitution which shall unite the spirit of our ancient, free, and only legitimate government, with that of the British constitution, excepting always what relates to our holy Catholic religion.

For the attainment and preservation of our ancient rights, by acclamation we solicited your Majesty to become our Sovereign, and as such we supplicate your Majesty, in the name of justice, humanity, of all laws human and divine, and by the loss of the twenty thousand of our countrymen who died during the period of blockade, that you will be pleased to order the restitution of those rights and privileges, conceded by our ancient sovereigns, and confirmed by their successors, for which we were authorized to give our consent in every change of government, and which right cannot be withheld from us without a violation of justice; which we certainly do not look for from the just government of your Majesty, the sovereign of our hearts.

We your Majesty's petitioners, as in duty bound, will never cease to pray for your Majesty, and protest our fidelity to your throne.

Malta, 10th July, 1811.

(Signatures.)

*Extract from the extraordinary publication, issued by the Governor of Malta, in consequence of the said Petition, and dated from the Palace 23rd August, 1811, and signed by F. Laing, Acting Public Secretary, by command of his Excellency.*

The King's Civil Commissioner observes with regret that some weak and inconsiderate persons, deceived under specious pretexts, have suffered themselves to become the instruments of a few turbulent and factious individuals. They have been seduced to subscribe a paper purporting to be an application to the King for certain changes in the existing form of the government of these islands, &c. &c.

This circumstance alone is sufficient to persuade the British public of the arbitrary and tyrannical manner in which the people of Malta have been treated, notwithstanding all the stipulations and promises. A national petition, authorized by the organ of the British Government itself; a petition of a people who trusted on the honour and integrity of H. M. officers, of their friends, of their protectors; this petition, signed by a great number of noblemen and other respectable individuals, whose interests had been sacrificed, and the honour of whose country had been degraded; this very petition has been dishonoured by the Governor of the Island, a military man, who abused his authority by publicly designating the subscribers to that petition as weak, inconsiderate, turbulent, and factious; and such strange conduct only took place on account of their having stated facts which had actually happened, and which they were ready to prove! What would the people of England say if their right of petitioning, which is held so sacred amongst them, were to be violated only to a tenth part of the extent to which the rights of the Maltese were with respect to this petition? Let the enemies of the Maltese give an answer to this in defence of their proceedings if they can.

His Majesty's Government, after the receipt of the petition, and the communications which took place between Lord Liverpool and the Marquis N. Testaferatta, who was dispatched to this country by the Maltese for that purpose, and who explained and particularized in writing

for his Majesty's information, all the Maltese grievances, which would be too long to insert here, ordered a commission to be opened at Malta in 1812. This commission, however, was conducted in such a manner as to satisfy the local authorities of that island rather than the Maltese; and consequently, protests were sent by some respectable individuals to the members of the commission as well as to the Colonial office, against the mode in which that commission was conducted.

After the commission, and, I suppose, after the receipt of the report of the commissioners, Sir Thomas Maitland arrived in Malta as governor. On the 5th Oct. 1813, he issued a proclamation, stating—

His Royal Highness's gracious determination henceforth to recognise the people of Malta and Gozo, as subjects of the British Crown and as entitled to its fullest protection. To secure to the Maltese, in the fullest manner, the free exercise of their religion,—to maintain their ecclesiastical establishment, to introduce such amelioration in the proceedings of the courts of law, as will secure to every one the certainty of speedy and effective justice,—to make such improvement in the laws themselves, as past experience or change of circumstances may have rendered necessary and advisable,—and, in short, to adopt every measure that may be requisite to secure to the inhabitants a full share of that happiness, wealth, security, and prosperity, fortunately enjoyed by all the subjects of the British empire in every part of the world.

It is naturally to be believed that the Maltese were expecting the promised ameliorations to begin by the re-establishment of their National Council, and the removal of the abuses introduced into the administration of the civil government complained of in the said petition.

I am confident that no Englishman will believe what I am under the necessity of stating, in a few words, for his information, as it will appear to him impossible; but facts, documents, and the unanimous declaration of the Maltese, will prove the assertion.

Our institution under the name of Università, which existed for several centuries, a municipal body composed of very respectable Maltese, with the title of Jurats, an-

ciently elected by the National Council, an establishment of the greatest utility, as it represented the people, and had the management of several financial concerns and pious institutions belonging to the Maltese ; this establishment, enjoying many privileges, and respected by all our ancient sovereigns, by the latter despotic grandmasters, and even by the French themselves, by a single stroke of Sir Thos. Maitland's pen in 1818 was abolished *in toto*. Another institution conducted by four persons called also Jurats, who had the management of the Grain Department, was in the same time, and in the like manner, abolished *in toto*.

The following is an extract of a few paragraphs from the proclamation by which these establishments were destroyed—

His Excellency feels himself now called upon to come to the determination of abolishing *in toto* the several establishments of jurats within these islands, from the commencement of the year 1819, from which period the following arrangements will take place.

Three Commissioners will be appointed by Government, under the title of "The Commissioners of the Board of Supply," who will conduct the whole of the concerns within these islands relative to the purchase or sale of grain (or of cattle if necessary), on account of Government, under instructions to be furnished to them for the purpose.

The whole of the property and other revenues at present attached to the several establishments of jurats in these islands, will be transferred, from the 1st of January next, to the Collector of his Majesty's Land Revenue.

The public archives and records will be lodged in the Chief Secretary's office.

The oppression inflicted on the unfortunate Maltese went on as follows. Besides the Jurats for the Grain Department, four administrators of public property, the Governor of Gozo, the President of the Courts of Justice, the heads of the Police Establishments, of the Customhouse, and of other departments, all with very moderate stipends, were replaced by Englishmen of Sir Thomas Maitland's choice, with enormous salaries. The several



Maltese military corps, altogether about 2000 men, were reduced to a small number ; officers, who had exposed their lives during the siege, were dismissed with only a few months pay. This number has, subsequently, been still further diminished, and brought down to the present number of 500 men (whose Colonel is a Corsican), paid from the Island Revenue. The laws have been altered and left incomplete ; confusion has arisen in consequence ; a great number of proclamations, notifications, and regulations, &c. took place afterwards ; some enactments were oppressive in the extreme, to the injury of the peaceable inhabitants. The charges in the numerous tribunals were fixed excessively high and ruinous. The University was neglected and rendered mercenary. Impositions, under the name of licenses, affecting the poor, were likewise fixed. Sir Thomas Maitland was a military man of an arbitrary and despotic disposition : he had all the powers of an absolute sovereign ; he was the governor, the legislator, and the judge. His arbitrary example was communicated to all those who surrounded him, and who have continued to oppress us up to the present time. What could the trade of our unfortunate island expect from such people ! The quarantine duties and restrictions, and the port dues, were fixed in such a manner as to send vessels back rather than to encourage them. Heavy duties were imposed on all articles of import, as well as on those of export, and the avidity of Sir Thomas Maitland for taxing, reached so far as to levy 80 per cent. on the exportation of Malta wrought stone ; thus checking the national industry, and depriving the poor people of their means of subsistence ; this duty, however, was afterwards reduced, and removed entirely by the ever-lamented Marquis of Hastings, that noble, generous, and excellent man, the pride of his country, and the friend of the Maltese, who, unfortunately, governed Malta for two years and a half only, and was disposed to do many things for the good of the Maltese, who venerated him as their

father and their protector, he having left them a beautiful establishment, which will serve to cherish his memory, for the education, protection, and maintenance of a considerable number of girls (which number since his death has been shamefully reduced), under the name of "The House of Industry." We also owe to him the free practice of the island, with all the continental ports obtained through his exertions, and through the fame of his name all over the world. These restrictions, impositions, and checks upon commerce, as well as the extraordinary behaviour and oppressive enactments of Sir Thomas Maitland, who, it would appear, had decided from the first moment to reduce to beggary, if not to despair, the whole people of Malta, took place after stipulations, solemn promises, deputations, petitions, commissions, and his Majesty's own order in Council, given from his Court at Weymouth, the 30th July 1801, declaring Malta a free port! "His Majesty grants you full protection, and the enjoyment of all your dearest rights. Happy people!" These sacred and inviolable expressions on the part of a Sovereign of the British empire, of a Sovereign of a great and generous nation, of the most liberal nation in the world, were all at once thrown under foot,—were destroyed! but no, I am very much in error in saying destroyed: while England exists, and a Maltese is to be found on the island of Malta, these promises will never perish; a little time only may still elapse, but they will revive, they will be put in practice. It is in the knowledge of every Maltese, that the sentiments of the Sovereign and of the British nation, on the subject of Malta, were and are entirely opposite to those entertained by Sir Thomas Maitland, when he took it upon him to effect the unpopular reform, or rather destruction, above stated. We should certainly have been treated in a different way by them; we should have also saved five millions of scudes in the capitulation of 1800; we should certainly not have had our National Assembly suppressed, our

municipal bodies and entire establishments, which had existed for centuries, abolished *in toto* ; our principal offices occupied by persons who had not the least claims on the Government of Malta, in the stead of deserving and meritorious natives, faithful and loyal subjects of His Majesty, whom their hearts had elected for their sovereign, for their father, and for their protector ; they would not have seen their island loaded with insupportable burdens, their trade annihilated, disorder and mismanagement in various branches of the Local Government, the people impoverished and reduced to beggary, and persons dead through starvation ; they would not have seen their archives, their national pride, their valuable diplomas and privileges from their ancient sovereigns, granting them immunities and franchises, snatched from their hands and carried to the Secretary's office, where no Maltese eye can glance at them ; they would not have seen their national honour degraded, their name and their fame humbled, their University rendered insignificant and mercenary, and thus the essential education of youth, and the progress of intellect, checked ; their liberty destroyed, free discussion prohibited : in a word, they would not have seen slavery becoming general amongst them, in lieu of that liberty, which they had acquired by the blood of thousands of their brave countrymen, and which was promised, as we have already said, by His Majesty, through his representative, Sir Charles Cameron, whose memory will remain impressed in the minds of the Maltese, and fixed in their hearts for ever, as one of the most amiable men that ever existed, who, unfortunately, was allowed to govern Malta only about one year, while Sir Thomas Maitland unfortunately was continued as governor for not less than ten years and a half, when he died, and with him died also his oppression of the people of Malta, but the consequences remain to this day.

The British and native merchants, observing the great

decay of commerce, the oppressive enactments of Sir Thomas Maitland, and the deplorable situation and misery of the population, framed, in 1821, a petition addressed to the House of Commons. This was sent to an agent in this country, who having submitted it to a member of that House, on examination it was found to be irregular in its form and extremely long, for which reason it was deemed proper not to present it to the House, but to return it to Malta for correction ; but before doing so, it having been communicated by a deputation of British merchants interested in the trade of Malta, to Lord Bathurst, the Secretary for the Colonies, who there met with Sir Thomas Maitland, at that time in London, a discussion took place, and his Lordship having declared himself particularly opposed to any establishment of a Colonial Assembly, but that he would not object to redress some of the points contained in the petition relative to commerce, the merchants at Malta, in expectation of the accomplishment of their chief aim, " trade," consented to withdraw the petition, but they were soon disappointed, as nothing else was done by the Local Government except the cession of the monopoly on grain, substituting a heavy duty in lieu of the profits arising in favour of the Government from that monopoly.

This petition being extremely long, I only insert an extract of a few paragraphs, leaving out a great part of it, and the numerous voluminous appendices, with the exception of one only marked N, which may give an idea to the British public how the Local Government counteracts the effect of the petitions which are sent from Malta to the mother country, in order to divert the minds of the British public from the real state of the island of Malta, and to prevent as long as possible the Maltese from obtaining the object of their desires.

*To the Honourable the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The humble Petition of the undersigned Merchants and Inhabitants of the Island of Malta, sheweth*

That your petitioners having for some years past experienced great distress, and been subjected to serious evils, in consequence of certain defects in the constitution of the civil government of this Island; and having found from experience that the memorials, however respectful, have hitherto met with unmerited neglect, they have been driven by necessity to that last and solemn appeal, which their privilege as subjects, and their birthrights as Englishmen, fully secure to them, by submitting their complaints to the liberal sentiments and impartial judgment of a British Parliament.

Your petitioners are inclined to think that the interests of this island have strong and peculiar claims to the attention and support of your Honourable House. An island whose inhabitants fondly flattered themselves, that in voluntarily placing it under the protection of Great Britain, they bestowed its sovereignty upon a power too just to oppress and generous to deceive them.

Your petitioners have good cause to fear that these hopes and expectations have not been realized; that a melancholy alteration has not only taken place in the sentiments of the people, but that conclusions most unfavourable to Great Britain are drawn, from the actual state of the Island, when compared with its prosperity under the Government of the Order of St. John.

The most prominent imperfections, the grand defect in the actual constitution of the civil government of this island, that upon which every other in some measure hinges, and which pervades its whole system, is the unlimited and undefined power of the Governor, who, your Petitioners will venture to assert, has as much real influence over the person and property of the subject as is possessed by any Sovereign in Europe. There is no salutary check upon his proceedings, no independent Colonial Assembly, or Municipal Body, to assist him with its advice, or to originate and support a proper and necessary opposition to his measures when incompatible with the liberties of the persons under his influence, and where the interests of Government are in question, there are few judges who would venture to support the rights of an individual.

During the period in which this island was possessed by the Order of St. John, its inhabitants were happy and contented, a strong proof of which is contained in the wonderfully rapid increase of its population under that Government; the great revenue drawn from Catholic Europe and spent in the island; the number of the Knights constantly residing in it; the strong naval and military force kept continually on foot; the policy of the Order, whose grand object was to augment the number of its subjects; the unrestricted commerce in manufactured cotton (the great staple commodity of the soil) with the Continent, but more parti-

cularly with Spain; these, and other circumstances too tedious for detail, all contribute to nourish a population far beyond what the bare resources of the Island could either employ or support.

The loss of all these advantages was more than compensated during the late war by the extensive trade of which, owing to the then unprecedented state of Europe, this island became the emporium; but since the general peace of 1814, it has been in a great measure deprived of this resource, and is now threatened with its total extinction, in consequence of the impolitic restriction imposed upon its commerce by the Local Government.

Had the Government of Malta in 1813 listened to the urgent representations of its Board of Health, your Petitioners have good reason to believe that the plague which ravaged the island in that and the following year would never have been introduced into it; or, at least, that its fatal progress would have been early checked, as the measures recommended in the first instance by the Board were the very same which it was ultimately found necessary to have recourse to, after a heavy expense had been incurred, and a great sacrifice of lives had shown the inefficacy of the temporizing expedients adopted by the Local Government to stop the contagion.

One of the first acts of the present Government was the abolition of the Board of Health, and the substitution, in its stead, of an expensive establishment, having at its head a single superintendent, and conducted upon such partial and unjustifiable principles that the duration of the restraint, or an entire exception from any, depends solely on the rank or circumstances of the individual; in proof of which your Petitioners cannot do otherwise than instance the landing of the Governor and his suite, from Tunis, in 1815, without having even submitted to the forms of quarantine.

Your Petitioners have now to offer to the consideration of your Honourable House an Institution which they believe to be peculiar to this Island, in the civil administration of which it forms a very material feature.

From the total inadequacy of the corn grown in the island for the consumption of its vast population, in the constant danger it was formerly exposed to of being blockaded, and even invaded, by the Turks, it was found expedient, at a very early period, to guard against these contingencies and their fatal consequences by the establishment of an institution whose principal object it should be to keep the Island regularly supplied with the corn necessary for its consumption at a reasonable price.

This establishment, which was named the "Università," or, to speak more correctly, the "Massa Frumentaria," was administered, gratis, by four native officers, called "Giurati," who, though in fact nominated by the Grand-Master, were in a great degree independent of his authority, or, at least, were not identified with the Government, which seldom, if



ever, interfered directly with the administration of this branch of the public service.

This Institution has been of late re-modelled, and the native giurati dismissed to make room for the Englishmen distinguished by the title of Commissioners of the Board of Supply.

Your Petitioners have no hesitation in affirming that this Board is not only unnecessary, but, as now constituted, highly prejudicial to the commerce, and destructive to the welfare of the Island.

Your Petitioners have now to claim the patience of your Honourable House while they submit a few observations on the important subject of the administration of justice.

In new-modelling the judicial system the Government appears to have acted upon a conviction, the truth of which has not been confirmed by experience, that the expense of law checks litigation; and as in pursuance of this operation the fees paid to Government are not only exorbitant, but the mode in which they are levied vexatious, they must be considered in the light of a tax by no means unproductive; so that the Government, far from having any inducement to promote a general good understanding, is placed in the singular position of having a direct and evident interest in the encouragement of litigiousness.

With regard to the Court of Bankruptcy, your petitioners will content themselves with quoting the concluding paragraph of a Memorial lately addressed to his Excellency the Governor by the Committee of British Merchants:

“That the uniform tendency of the proceedings in the Court of Bankruptcy from the period of its institution to the present moment has been

“To protect the debtor (in many instances a fraudulent one), and to enrich a few individuals at the expense of the creditor.”

Your Petitioners have already alluded, in general terms, to the restrictions upon trade, but a subject so important requires more particular elucidation.

Whenever it has been considered necessary to communicate with the present Local Government on matters touching commercial interests, your Petitioners have generally had occasion to observe with the deepest regret that every such representation was construed into a wish or an attempt on the part of the mercantile body to exempt itself from all burdens, and to an unwillingness to contribute its due proportion to the public revenue:

Your Petitioners feel confident in asserting that at no period did such sentiments prevail; the mercantile body, it is true, did from time to time, through the organ of its committee, represent, as was its duty, the impolitic tendency of certain measures affecting the trade, and though invariably conveyed in the most respectful language, its representations rarely received the attention they deserved.

On the contrary, the Government appeared not only to consider the interest of the trade as incompatible with its own, but even seemed to look with jealousy and distrust upon a body whose public character had been fully recognised in all the changes which had taken place in the Civil Government of the Island.

An idea has been carefully inculcated by the advocates of Government, in defence of its proceedings, that it was not in the nature of things that Malta could be in time of peace a place of any commercial consequence.

Your Petitioners would beg to observe in reply to this assumption, that, although never so unreasonable as to suppose its commerce during peace could bear the most remote comparison with its flourishing state in the last war, yet Malta was capable of retaining a very great share of that trade, had it been the study, as it clearly was the policy, of the Local Government to cultivate its resources, and to afford that scope which in all justice and prudence it ought to have given to the capital and industry of the Island.

Your Honourable House, with that wisdom which might have been expected from it, and that anxious concern for the commercial interests of the colonies which has so invariably and honourably characterized its proceedings, opened a direct trade between this Island and our East and West Indian dominions; a most judicious measure, which had originally engaged the serious attention and received the cordial support of his Excellency the Governor. Had this wise and prudent policy been afterwards met with a corresponding degree of solicitude on the part of the Local Government, had it availed itself of the advantages arising from the favourable position of the Island, its admirable harbours, and the security afforded to persons and property under British protection, one great cause of the distress at present experienced would have been avoided, and much discontent and dissatisfaction prevented.

The trade to which the situation of Malta peculiarly adapts it, and to which it must look as the principal resource of its future prosperity, is a transit trade, the very existence of which depends upon an exception from every expense that can possibly be spared, and a determination to give it all the facility and freedom of which it may be susceptible. It cannot bear those taxes which may be safely levied upon articles destined for home consumption, nor those checks to which it has been so imprudently subjected in Malta.

Admitting for a moment the truth of what has been so falsely maintained, that the trade of Malta cannot be of any importance in time of peace;

Your Petitioners would wish to ask in that case how its population is to be supported? The corn produced in the Island, under the most favourable circumstances, is not sufficient for its supply for four months in the year; in what manner is the grain (not to mention any other

necessaries of life) that must be imported for the consumption of the remaining eight months to be paid for, particularly while the Government looks to this supply as a principal source of its revenue ?

Your Petitioners apprehend that the only answer which can be given to the question is, By its trade ; and if that fails it, the alternative must be, that the mother country will be itself under the necessity of supporting the colony, or of seeing its population rapidly diminish under the effects of a policy that will leave an indelible stain upon her honour and humanity.

That the remonstrances of the mercantile body have not been without foundation as to the practice of Government in the imposition of duties, your Petitioners will satisfy themselves, and, they hope, your Honourable House, by a reference to the duty upon barley formerly alluded to.

When the Government found during the last year, in consequence of the high monopoly price of wheat, its issue rapidly falling off, and that the lower classes had recourse to barley and Indian corn as substitutes, without giving the slightest warning of its intention, or the most distant reason to suppose that any such measure was in contemplation, it suddenly imposed a duty of about 30 per cent. *ad valorem* (which has since been augmented to about 80 per cent.) upon these grains ; and levied it upon cargoes which had been purchased, and had actually arrived in port, upon the faith of a fixed and known impost ; and when application was made for redress, the answer obtained was, that the difference in price occasioned by the duty must be paid by the consumer, and therefore could not affect the speculator ; an allegation not borne out by facts, for the consumer, as we have already stated, being unable to pay the equivalent, was compelled to have recourse to unwholesome substitutes, to the prejudice of his own health, to the manifest injury, and, it might have happened, to the utter ruin of the speculator.

Your Petitioners will venture to affirm that this was a most imprudent and unjustifiable measure, neither founded on sound principles or political economy, nor consistent with common equity. The Government which could thus, with impunity, lay an unexpected and prohibitory duty on one article might do it on another, and thereby put a stop at once to all commercial operations, as no merchant could for a moment consider his property secure in his undertakings ; safe under such a system pursued by a Government not only possessing, but actually exercising, these unusual and extraordinary powers.

The motive for all these proceedings has been the necessity of raising a revenue at any cost, to meet the profuse expense of the civil administration, and for the support of an establishment calculated for the government of a country infinitely more extensive and populous than Malta. For the attainment of this favourite object all means have been tried, and every expedient adopted, with nearly the same success ; from a monopoly of corn to the scheme of a lottery.

When these expenses are reduced within the limits which the re-

sources of the Island could bear, were they bounded by that system of economy which its pecuniary situation imperiously demands, your Petitioners have no hesitation in saying that an adequate revenue might be created without having recourse to the ruinous expedients from which it has been hitherto derived; but while the Government of Malta is considered merely as a sinecure, a source of patronage, or a step to preferment; while her commerce is destroyed, her resources neglected, her inhabitants deprived of their just weight in the management of their own affairs, and carefully excluded from all offices of honour, trust, or profit, so long must the misery which now presses upon her population continue, and the discontent naturally consequent upon such a state of things.

In a small community the effects of such a system are the more apparent as they are the more circumscribed and divested of that intricacy which must necessarily attend the revenue and expenditure of a great country: in the former case, the whole of the mechanism is exposed to the eye, and may be traced from its origin through all its progress to the final result. The lesson is an instructive one. The determination of this Government to create a revenue equal to its expenditure, has at length nearly produced the consequence that might reasonably have been anticipated;—the sources from which that revenue has been derived are nearly dried up, and the means of future production destroyed by the very measures adopted by the Government for the supply of its immediate wants.

Your Petitioners have now brought to a close their humble observations upon those more important points connected with the present subject, which calls for the legislative interference of your Honourable House; but there are numerous subjects of minor consequence, which, for the reasons formerly stated, are not submitted to its consideration.

It therefore only remains for your Petitioners to point out the remedies they, in all humility, conceive it necessary to apply, in order to restore to the suffering population of this interesting Island any proportion of its former prosperity: these are—

1st. The formation of a Council or Colonial Assembly, without whose sanction no laws can be promulgated, and no taxes imposed, and whose duty it shall be to watch over the Island.

Malta has now been for upwards of twenty years in the possession of Great Britain; during the last six years of which period her trade and prosperity have been gradually, but visibly, declining, and her population exposed to extreme distress, which has been borne with the most exemplary patience. After such a protracted trial it can be scarcely considered unreasonnable that the Colony should expect and claim some participation in the blessings of the British Constitution, nor that its respectable inhabitants should enjoy, at least, a share in the internal administration of their own affairs.

2nd. The re-establishment of the Board of Health, whose first ob-

ject should be to renew the correspondence formerly kept up with the continental lazarettoes, and to communicate to them its determination to adhere rigidly to the laws of quarantine, and not permit the slightest infringement of them, upon any pretence or plea whatever. Foreign states can then no longer urge the necessity, now insisted upon, of subjecting the Island to constant quarantine, to the infinite detriment of its prosperity and trade.

3rd. The abolition of the monopoly of Corn.

Your Petitioners have now fulfilled what they, in all humility, conceive to be not only the privilege, but the duty of every subject, by stating their grievances, and the manner in which they may be removed, in plain but respectful language; and they most humbly pray your Honourable House, before their Petition be laid upon your table, to pause for a moment, and seriously to reflect, that upon the solemn decision of your Honourable House depends the future happiness or misery of one hundred thousand loyal and voluntary subjects of the Crown of

GREAT BRITAIN.\*

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

Signed by all the British and Native Merchants, and  
by people of great respectability on the Island.

\* Note N. The local authorities, alarmed at the idea of the present petition, availed themselves of the usual expedients of a weak Government to check it in its progress, by practising on the hopes of some and the fears of others, and even by condescending to employ a *Judge* for the purpose of collecting signatures among their hired servants and pensioners, to an address, extolling the paternal solicitude and wise measures of their administration, and painting, no doubt in glowing colours, the happiness, content and satisfaction, now prevailing among the inhabitants of this Island, at the flourishing state of its commerce and agriculture.

Notwithstanding these laudable endeavours, this praiseworthy anxiety, on the part of the Local Government, to prevent the publication of the truth, it will be no easy task for it to point out one respectable individual connected with the trade of the Island who has not signed this petition, unless he be immediately dependent upon the Government, or has been led to entertain hopes of employment under it.

Thus the most essential point, of establishing a check upon the unbounded power of the Governor, was at the moment dropped by the merchants in the hope of some advantages in trade, which were never satisfactorily obtained.

From Lord Bathurst's expressed feeling, as above stated, it may be concluded that not only the Civil Com-

missioners, or the Governors of that island, but also His Majesty's Ministers themselves, contributed to deprive the Maltese of the possession of their rights and demands, and such conduct certainly confirms the idea of the Maltese, viz. that in having offered their island to Great Britain, they, instead of becoming subjects of His Majesty, became vassals of his servants, who delegate other inferior servants and their satellites to govern them according to their wishes or interests.

The destructive system above alluded to having continued, and the misery having naturally increased, the Maltese, who are resolute and firm never to give up their rights, framed another petition to His Majesty in council, and presented it to the Lieut.-Governor on the 18th May 1832, but after a delay of about forty days, during which time a packet had left Malta for England (eleven days after its presentation), and another was also on the point of departing, it was said that the petition was not as yet transmitted, and that it was to be modified, and some paragraphs omitted, in order that his Excellency the Lieut.-Governor might not find a difficulty in forwarding it. In consequence of this intimation a difference arose amongst the persons who had signed the petition; some very few, half-a-dozen in number, admitted that the modifications and omissions, to please the Lieut.-Governor, should be made; others insisted that it should remain unaltered; and the latter consequently entered into a formal protest at the Secretary's office against any modifications or omissions. His Excellency, having called together some of the persons so insisting, told them that he would not forward the petition, in consequence of the existing difference of opinions, and left it to them to frame another petition if they chose; and he then returned the one which he had previously received to the small party who were willing to comply with the recommended modifications. In the mean time the greater number of the petitioners, headed by the Baron Camillo Sceberras, Dr. Arcangelo



Pullicino, Dr. J. Spiteri, and myself, framed a new petition of the same tenor as the former, confirming it in every part of its contents, which was signed by a much greater number of respectable individuals and heads of families than the former one, and presented it to the Lieut.-Governor on the 18th of July of the same year; and another petition, modified according to the suggestions made on that occasion, was also framed by the other party, headed by Dr. G. Bruno, Mr. R. Rocco, and Dr. P. Sciortino, and presented simultaneously to his Excellency. Both these petitions were transmitted to His Majesty's Ministers by the Local Government, while the persisting party wrote to Lord Goderich, then Secretary for the Colonies, informing him of what had happened, who acknowledging, through the Local Government, the receipt of the petitions, promised to take them into consideration, and to send an answer to their contents by another opportunity.

Before inserting these two petitions, we think proper to warn the British public, that, although they differ in the exposition of the abuses and complaints, they however agree in the substance, and both ask for a check upon the unbounded power of the Governor, and against the system on which the Island is unfortunately governed.

#### PETITION CONFIRMED.

*To the King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.*

SIR:

The undersigned inhabitants of the island of Malta and its dependencies, faithful and loyal subjects of your Majesty, grieved at the progressive deterioration of their country, and alarmed at the prospect of a future still worse, "in confirmation of a similar petition laid before the Throne, through the means of the Lieutenant-Governor, on the 18th of May 1832," humbly venture to lay at your Majesty's feet their earnest supplications, entreating from your Majesty a relief for present and a remedy against future evils.

And since at the epoch of your Majesty's happy accession to the throne a lively confidence arose in the minds of the Maltese, of obtaining such acts of beneficial disposition as may redound to the advantage of these islands; and it is in this hope that the undersigned take upon themselves

to inform your Majesty that since the year 1800, a remarkable and successive change has taken place in the fundamental laws of the country; the national privileges have gradually been all disregarded or suspended; to the representative magistracies have been substituted others more dependent; in such manner that former laws coming into collision with recent, and ancient with modern institutions, a system of administration has been engendered at once defective and inconvenient.

The natives of Malta have not failed from time to time to lay their supplications before the glorious Throne of your predecessors, and in consequence, in October 1813, a proclamation was issued by the Local Government to the following effect: "That His Majesty had been pleased to take into consideration the uncertain and unsettled state of the Maltese, and that it was his gracious determination to acknowledge them as subjects of the British Crown, and as such entitled to his most ample protection; that in consequence the necessary measures were to be taken by the Government in Malta, to secure to the inhabitants an entire participation in the happiness, advantages, security and prosperity enjoyed by all subjects of the British empire in every part of the globe."

The measures locally taken, however, did not correspond with the beneficial intentions of the Sovereign; the legislative power dependent on the will of a single person, in no way moderated, nor assimilated to that of the Mother Country, and at times exercised without taking into consideration the interests and circumstances of these islands, thus became the source of not a few evils.

The want of a clear and well-digested code has given rise to the present fluctuation in the laws, it being sometimes necessary to recur to the Roman jurisprudence, and at others to Sicilian, English, and municipal statutes, or to a series of proclamations, notifications, orders, and regulations, too often in discordance with each other, and from time to time modified, varied and revoked, so that from such a compilation there results to the citizens but little security for either person or property.

It is true that the judiciary power, by the constitution of 1814, received considerable modifications, all based on sound and liberal principles and maxims; but from unforeseen circumstances the plan remaining imperfect and incomplete, failed in its principal scope of equalizing the condition of the Maltese with that of His Majesty's other fortunate subjects.

The Judicial establishments, many in number, but not organized on an adequate and regular plan, are not sufficiently adapted to an expeditious administration of justice.

The undersigned also submit to your Majesty, that a great number of families derived their means of subsistence from moderate salaries attached to various public employments, which were unfortunately suppressed for the purpose of creating others, fewer in number and more expensive.

Dispositions of this nature, united to the profusion of large pensions



assigned on the revenues of these islands to persons not resident in the same, have been the cause of a taxation now far too heavy for this impoverished population. Not only are the imposts utterly disproportioned to the means of the inhabitants, obliged to furnish themselves from abroad with all the necessaries of life ; but the distribution is also ill-arranged and burdensome, objects of mere luxury being but lightly affected, whilst all articles of indispensable necessity are charged with heavy and oppressive duties, especially corn, which it is in vain to expect under the present system can ever be obtained at a moderate price.

The undersigned also observe the deficiency of a necessary encouragement to Agriculture, for several years in a declining condition ;—to Commerce, beyond measure, reduced and decaying ;—to the Mercantile Marine, scarcely at all advantaged. The languishing state of these three principal resources of the population augments the number of individuals out of employ, and every hour increases the frightful number of mendicants.

The undersigned further venture to remark, that the occasional relaxation of the rigour necessary for the observance of the Sanatory Regulations, has been seen here with sorrow. The slightest inattention in so salutary an institution, renders this island, with heavy loss to its commercial relations, liable to burdensome and unexpected quarantine dues in foreign ports, subjecting moreover the public health to the danger of contagion, of which there has been painful experience.

Your Majesty's humble petitioners cannot omit stating to your Majesty the great prejudice suffered by the population from the alienation of the funds destined from remote periods for the instruction of youth ; the want of a public elementary institution retains people in a state of ignorance. The University is deficient in professors, and in addition to its being no longer as heretofore gratis, it is neglected to such a degree, as to render instruction incomplete, and discourages respectable families as to the future welfare of their children, since in general they have no other prospects to hold out to them than those offered by the liberal arts and professions.

In order to arrest the course of the above enumerated evils, to prevent their progress, and to render prosperous your faithful subjects in these islands, the undersigned flatter themselves that your Majesty will consider opportune a reform in the legislative power ; the promulgation of a regular code of laws ; a better organization of the Judiciary system ; a more equable distribution and a decrease of the taxation ; a diminution of the above-mentioned pensions ; an independent Sanatory establishment, and some encouragement to public instruction, to commerce, to the mercantile shipping, and to agriculture.

Now your Petitioners, as loyal and faithful subjects of your Majesty, ingenuously confess that the above indicated evils are here generally attributed to the want of a body of the natives being associated with the local authorities ; since none can be better acquainted than themselves

with the circumstances and wants of their own country. In order—therefore, to obtain an object of such advantage to the inhabitants of these your islands, the undersigned, O Sire, humbly implore from your Majesty the advantage of a native council of competent number, to be freely elected from the classes of landholders, followers of the liberal professions, and merchants, to be consulted on the interests of these islands, and to be invested with the power of indicating the necessary legislative and economical remedies, not repugnant to the laws of the mother country, after the manner so sagely provided for by the constitution of Great Britain. Nor does this humble prayer proceed from any desire of novelty, since these islands, from a very remote epoch, actually enjoyed the advantage of so salutary an institution; and they still possessed it at the moment when, at the request of the natives, Great Britain accorded its protection to the people of Malta; a benefit always desired, and often requested by them, and the suspension of which for a time was regarded as a public calamity.

In imploring from your Majesty a renewal of such institution, we are encouraged, by observing that a Representation having been granted to other colonies by your Predecessors, to hope that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to accord a similar privilege to these islands, which for some time have been on a level with the rest of Europe in the scale of social advancement.

Such is the boon that is incessantly implored by the natives of these your Majesty's islands, subjects who, during the vicissitudes of the war, and the continuance of the peace, have always, O Sire, conducted themselves as faithful and affectionate subjects of your Throne.

(Signatures.)

N.B. The following paragraph was omitted in the above Petition by mistake, but it appeared in that presented on the 18th of May.

These and other evils complained of are felt not less by the landed interest, as the value of land being greatly reduced, renders more sensible the duty of Scisa, still levied, although the objects for which it was originally imposed no longer exist.

#### PETITION MODIFIED.

*To the King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.*

SIRE: The undersigned inhabitants of the Island of Malta and its dependencies, faithful and loyal subjects of your Majesty, grieved at the progressive deterioration of their country, and alarmed at the prospect of a future still worse, humbly venture to lay at your Majesty's feet these their earnest supplications, entreating from your Majesty a relief for present, and a remedy against future evils.

And since, from the commencement of your happy reign, O Sire, a lively confidence has arisen in the minds of the Maltese of obtaining such beneficent dispositions as may redound to the advantage of these islands, the undersigned humbly take upon themselves to observe that,

notwithstanding the most solemn promises made to them on various proclamations, in His Majesty's name, by his representatives in Malta, that they should enjoy his most ample protection and the free exercise of their rights, yet since the year 1800 a remarkable and successive change has taken place in the fundamental laws of the country,—the national privileges have been all gradually disregarded or suppressed,—for the representative magistracies have been substituted others more dependent, so that former laws contrasted with recent, and ancient institutions with modern, there has resulted a system of administration at once defective and burdensome.

The natives have not omitted to direct their representations to the glorious throne of your august predecessors, and in October, 1813, they were assured anew by means of a proclamation promulgated by the Local Government, that His Majesty was pleased to take into consideration the uncertain and unsettled state of the Maltese, and that it was his gracious determination to acknowledge them as subjects of the British Crown, and as such entitled to his most ample protection, and that the necessary measures were therefore to be taken by the Government in Malta to assure to the inhabitants a full participation in the happiness, advantages, and prosperity, which are fortunately enjoyed by all the subjects of the British empire in every part of the globe.

The measures locally taken, however, did not correspond with the dispositions of the Sovereign, since the legislative power concentrated always in the will of a single person was in no part moderated or assimilated to that of Great Britain, and sometimes exercised without taking into consideration the interests and circumstances of the natives, owing to the want of that information which cannot be acquired by the Governors, however well intentioned they may be, but after a long residence in the Island, was the source of not a few evils.

The want of a clear and well-digested code has given rise to the actual fluctuation of the laws, it being sometimes necessary to recur to the Roman jurisprudence, at others to Sicilian, English, and municipal statutes, or to a series of proclamations, notifications, orders, and regulations, often in discordance with each other, and from time to time modified, varied, and revoked, so that from such a compilation there results to the citizens but little security for either person or property.

It is true that the necessity of a code has been already acknowledged, and its compilation commanded, but as the Commission nominated with that view is limited to five individuals only, three of whom are strangers, without independent persons being united with them who have it in their power to represent the interests of the population, there is reason to fear that for want of the necessary information, and of public discussions, such code will be inadequate to the present necessities of these islands.

The judicial power in its actual state, although by the constitution of 1814 it received considerable modifications all based upon sound and

liberal principles, but owing to unforeseen circumstances left incomplete and imperfect, has failed in its chief scope, that of equalling the condition of the Maltese with that of your Majesty's other fortunate subjects.

The judiciary establishments, many in number but not organized upon a methodic and regular plan, notwithstanding the enormous expenses exacted from litigants, utterly disproportioned to the means of the country, are not sufficiently adapted to an expeditious administration of justice.

The undersigned further submit to your Majesty that want and distress are increased to a degree that is rapidly attacking all classes of persons. The ignorance of the people not provided against, the stagnation of commerce, the diminished resources of the agriculturist, and the general want of employment, daily augment the number of mendicants, and increase every minute the frightful and already too calamitous state of these islands.

To these mournful circumstances is united the existing system of the public imposts, entirely disproportioned to the exhausted means of the inhabitants.

Now as loyal and faithful subjects, your Majesty's Petitioners ingenuously confess, that setting aside other ruinous circumstances, one of the principal causes of the above indicated evils is here attributed to the suspension of the National Council which took place in 1800, and which, in the critical moments of the blockade and siege of Valletta, rendered eminent services to the Government then existing, and to the population, since if such institution of the country had been continued according to the solemn promises then made, these islands would never have sunk into their present calamitous state.

Hence to arrest as far as possible the evils pointed out above, to prevent their progress, to render prosperous your faithful Maltese subjects, to amalgamate them with the natives of Great Britain, and to attach them indissolubly to the Local Government, the undersigned humbly implore from your Majesty the repristination or institution of a National Council similar to that of 1798, the period of the blockade of Valletta, composed of about thirty members, to be elected by means of the free suffrages of native heads of families, proprietors, followers of the liberal professions and arts, and merchants, to be invested with the power, with the approbation of the Governor, of indicating and enacting such legislative and economical measures as may be essential to the well-being of these islands, and not repugnant to the laws of Great Britain, and to represent generally every thing that may relate to the public advantage and the good government of these possessions.

The undersigned, in humbly advancing their fervent supplications in order to obtain so beneficial an institution, have not had, and have not at present, other view than that of assisting by the opportuneness of information, consulting, and concurring for the common utility and prosperity with the local governor, since none can be better acquainted than the natives with the circumstances and wants of their own country.

Nor does this humble request proceed from love of novelty, since from remote times these islands have enjoyed the benefit of so salutary an institution, and continued to possess it at the happy epoch in which, at the instance of the natives, Great Britain accorded its protection to the Maltese people, an advantage always desired, often prayed for, and the suspension of which was regarded as a public calamity.

In imploring from your Majesty the repristination of such institution, we feel encouraged to observe that, representations having been conceded to the colonies by your predecessors, your Majesty, at once generous and beneficent, will graciously accord such boon to these islands, which for some time have been on a level with the rest of Europe in the scale of social advancement. Such is the favour incessantly implored by the natives of these islands, subjects who, during the vicissitudes of the war, and the continuance of the peace, have always conducted themselves, O Sire, as faithful and affectionate subjects of your Majesty's throne.

(Signatures.)

I leave it to the British public to decide whether the local authorities at Malta had a right to act as they did on the occasion of these two petitions. The right of petitioning in England is known by the Maltese to be sacred, particularly that of presenting a national petition to His Majesty; and therefore the authorities were bound in duty to forward it to its destination by the first packet. Within the eleven days that elapsed from the time of the receipt of the first petition to the sailing of the packet, they might have written what they thought proper in their defence against our complaints.

The people, however, were resolved not to be baffled or intimidated by any irregular step, a proof of which is that the number of the names of subscribers to the confirmed petition was augmented to three times that of the former one.

It will astonish all those impartial persons, who are not acquainted with the management of the Government affairs in the island of Malta, to learn that the result of the above petitions, far from being consoling (as it was expected with the greatest anxiety), proved to be an increase of oppression. Under the pretence of relieving the population from a part of the tax upon the transfer

of landed property, and of abolishing that on the transfer of shipping, new tariffs were framed, more aggravating to the population than the former ones.

While these petitions were going on, fresh situations were taken out of the hands of the Maltese and given to Englishmen. The advocate fiscal with a moderate salary, was replaced by the Attorney General with a considerable salary. The Secretary to the Lieut.-Governor of Gozo, a native of the Island, was also replaced by an Englishman; and lately, in 1835, another Englishman, with the title of Storekeeper, took the place of a very meritorious Maltese, who was so much hurt and disgusted at this act of injustice, after his long services, that he died a few days afterwards of apoplexy. The excise-office, conducted until then by a Maltese, was incorporated with the custom-house, under the management of an Englishman, for which addition to his office this latter gentleman received an increase of salary. This increase of salary to the collector of customs, and the new salary of the storekeeper, were, of course, to be met by effecting some economy, or reduction of salaries to the Maltese, as usual. This was expected, and it did not fail to take place. The miserable salaries enjoyed by six public weighers in the custom-house, 10*d.* a day each, were on that occasion entirely taken from them.

Now, let me ask any Englishman, whether such proceedings could be endured by any people, even the best disposed in the world, and the most faithful subjects that could exist on earth. It is clear that these acts of oppression will be without end in the island of Malta, unless through the interposition of the British nation, to whom the Maltese now appeal. The avidity of the Government of Malta is manifest. It would have brought any people to despair; but the patience shown by the Maltese is enough to convince any man of their attachment to the British nation.

To give an idea of the hardship of the increase of the above-mentioned tariffs, it is sufficient to say that the common wine, which is the beverage of the whole population, now reduced to the lowest state of misery, and which was a trifle in the time of the Order of St. John, according to these tariffs, pays about 100 per cent. on the original cost at the place of shipment; and as to the rest we cannot better comment than by inserting the following representation of the British merchants in London connected with the trade of Malta.

London, 25, Old Jewry; 1 March, 1833.

My Lord: We, the undersigned British Merchants, trading to the island of Malta, have the honour of calling your Lordship's attention to a new tariff of duties, recently established by the Government of that island.

The policy of levying any Custom House duty in an island situated as Malta is, depending almost entirely on a transit trade, has long been deplored by us; but we could never have imagined that it was the intention of Government to increase that duty, which has been done by this new tariff, in many instances to a considerable extent.

The Bonding Warehouses established in Malta have only in rare instances been availed of, from the difficulty and even impossibility of managing business under such restraints; and the duty levied under the old tariff of one per cent, has generally been submitted to on goods in transit for the consumption of other places. Should, however, the present increase of duties be continued, such business must receive a further check, and our intercourse with that island be in a great measure confined to the consumption of its inhabitants.

We therefore earnestly pray that your Lordship will take measures for the abolition of this new tariff, the operation of which would prove so destructive to British commercial interests. We have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble servants,

(Signatures.)

To the Right Honourable Lord Auckland,

President of the Board of Trade, &c. &c. &c.

It would occupy too much space to enter into farther particulars on the mode in which we have been treated by the local authorities. The Grain Department is conducted by foreigners, who replaced the Maltese only on account of their being Maltese, which is an open insult

offered to them in their own island, and which insult has naturally rendered the whole population dissatisfied. This department has been committing several *mistakes*, to the prejudice of the people, of which we only note a few. Purchases of grain of very bad quality have been made on different occasions; and purchases made abroad by the Government agents or Government officers, which, had they been made at Malta, through contracts with the local merchants, British or Maltese, or by tenders, would have been not only beneficial to the Government, but also to the trade of the Island. Let the merchants themselves speak, as they can give better explanations than myself on this subject.

It is the greatest injustice that a department of this kind, which should give full satisfaction to the people, is conducted by foreigners, and not by respectable natives as formerly, who would be answerable for their conduct not only to the Government, but also to the people.

From the following letter the British nation will discover one of the most tyrannical dispositions that has ever been heard of. The sample therein alluded to may be brought before Parliament if required.

George Mitrovich, Esq.  
London.

Malta, 8th February, 1836.

Dear Sir: As you are exerting yourself in so meritorious a manner in the British Capital for the purpose of obtaining for your countrymen redress of the heavy grievances under which they are labouring, we beg to represent to you one which we are persuaded will be deemed by you, and any one else it may be made known to, as of the most oppressive nature, and well worthy of being immediately brought before the legislature of Great Britain.

You are aware that there is an article produced in Egypt called *Sagina*—that this article is food for animals. We send you by this packet a small bag of it, that you may show it to any one who may not have a knowledge of it.

We are at this moment the holders of several cargoes. And we are prevented from effecting sales, because the Local Government enforces a duty of Sc. 3. 7. 4. to Sc. 3. 10. 16. of Malta per salm, that is seventy-eight per cent., for the article only costs five scudi per salm in Egypt.



This duty of seventy-eight per cent. precludes the possibility of sales, because it comes out too dear for the feeding of animals.

So far you will say that we have only pointed out to you a mere commercial grievance, of which species many others exist at Malta. But listen to what follows, and observe the spirit of this imposition of duty, and then say whether the fact we have detailed goes no further than to establish a mere commercial grievance.

Why was this enormous duty imposed? We are afraid we shall not be believed when we state the origin of it.

In 1819 the Local Government of Malta having in its hands the entire monopoly of wheat consumed in the island, found itself imperiously called upon by the circumstance of an abundant harvest in the surrounding grain countries, and the consequent low prices of wheat, to reduce its selling prices; and it therefore reduced the price of wheat from 40 scudi to 33 scudi and 4 tari per salm.

But the Government well knew that the poorer classes, of which two-thirds of the population of Malta consist, were not able, either at the former or at the reduced price, to purchase wheaten bread, but were eating bread made of a mixture of wheat, Indian corn, and barley, and that even this species of bread many of them had not the means of purchasing. The Government therefore made the reduction serve a double purpose, and in the same proclamation, dated the 1st of March 1819, after declaring the reduction, stated as follows:

“His Excellency” (i. e. Sir Thomas Maitland) “at the same time however, in order to secure the interests of Government under this monopoly (which have of late days been prejudiced by the importation of a large quantity of inferior grain, to mix with the wheat in the making of bread), is pleased to direct that from the 15th instant until further orders (independent of the general custom-house duty on importation), a duty of three scudi per salm shall be levied by the Commissioners of the Board of Supply upon all barley and Indian corn landed for consumption in the Island of Malta. The whole of this arrangement is, however, to be considered as of a temporary nature.

“By command of his Excellency,

(Signed)

“RICHARD PLASKET,

“Chief Secretary to the Government of Malta.”

By this enactment, all those who could not afford to purchase either wheat at the Government price, or Indian corn or barley at an increased price of three scudi per salm, were deprived of their chief, or rather only article of nourishment, and driven to eat the fruit of the locust tree, chesnuts, carrots, and other similar articles, like brute animals.

So the matter remained for five months. But still a large portion of the population who could not afford to pay the price of wheat could still purchase bread made of wheat and Indian corn and barley

mixed, or consume in divers ways the flour made from Indian corn alone.

On the 12th August, therefore, of the same year, a second proclamation was issued, in which the Government price of wheat was declared to be lowered from 33 scudi and 4 taris to 30 scudi per salm, and after this declaration, the proclamation went on to say :

" While the Government is thus fortunately enabled, from the present favourable appearance of the grain market, to furnish the inhabitants of these islands with wheat at a cheaper rate than has been known for the last twenty years, it becomes necessary for their sake, as well as for its own interests, that the monopoly should be most strictly secured and guarded against all encroachment from the introduction of inferior grains used in making bread.

" His Honour (i. e. the Lieutenant-Governor, Major-General John Thomas Layard) is therefore pleased to increase the duty fixed by the proclamation of 1st March last, on the importation of foreign barley and Indian corn into these possessions from 3 to 5 scudi per salm, to take place from the same date, viz., the 15th March."

Signed as above.

This proclamation is remarkable, inasmuch as there is hardly a line of it which is not at variance with the truth, except that which says that the enactment was for the interests of Government. How could it be for the sake of the natives that they were to be deprived of their daily bread? that they should not be allowed to eat barley and Indian corn, while they could not afford to pay for wheat? Did the Government believe that they consumed those grains out of caprice or wantonness in preference to wheat? Would any man in his senses do this? Was it not plain that want of means alone could induce individuals to prefer an inferior to a superior quality of bread?

Then again how could the laying of an additional duty on barley and Indian corn be to secure the monopoly of wheat? What is the meaning of the word monopoly? Is not the sense of it that no one except the person possessing it shall deal in the article monopolized? But neither barley nor Indian corn belonged to the monopoly; neither did bread. It was therefore singular, to say the least of it, that to prevent a starving population from eating barley and Indian corn, was to secure the monopoly of wheat. By the same rule, a duty might have been laid on every species of food down to the most trifling article of fruit or vegetable, in order that by making men live on bread alone, the monopoly might be secured!!! Then again who ever heard of a duty laid on in August to commence in the March preceding? In this proclamation, replete with moral turpitude, it was not enough to take away the people's bread, to tell them that in order to protect a monopoly of wheat the consumption of other grains must be prevented. All this was nothing

unless to oppression\*, insult and derision were added, and they were accordingly told that it was for their own sakes that their bread was taken from them.

This proclamation drove another flock of starving human beings to seek for some new species of nurture, since the diminution in the price of wheat did not, on account of the higher cost of that article, bring it within the reach of those from whom the augmentation of duty took away barley and Indian corn.

Still, however, the measure of iniquity was not complete; some could still purchase those articles, from whom that faculty must be taken away, and therefore on the 5th November of the same year (1819) a third proclamation contained the following enactment:

"His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor is pleased to order and direct that from the date hereof, until further orders, the duty fixed by those proclamations (i. e. of March and August preceding) upon all foreign barley and Indian corn imported for the consumption of these islands shall be increased, from five to eight scudi per salm."

Signed as the others.

The general outcry against these unjust measures, the complaints of the merchants, and above all a memorial to the House of Commons, prepared by them for the redress of many grievances, and especially those relating to grain, unwillingly forced the Government to part with its monopoly of grain, at least nominally.

In anticipation of that measure the duty on Indian corn and barley was by a proclamation, bearing date the 14th March, 1821, reduced from eight to five scudi per salm.

On the 24th January, 1822, by another proclamation, the monopoly was stated to be given up; and then there not appearing any interest at stake on the part of the Government to keep a heavy duty on Indian corn and barley, the duty established by that proclamation was, on the former article 3 scudi per salm by British, and 3½ scudi per salm by foreign vessels, on the latter, on rye, "or other inferior grains used in making bread," 2½ scudi in British, and 3 scudi in foreign bottoms.

Under this proclamation the people had the good fortune (although in Malta any duty whatever on the inferior grains is most iniquitous) to be subject to the reduced duty for twenty-eight months, when on the 21st June, 1824, out came the famous proclamation establishing a fluctuating tariff of duties on wheat, in which the payment of the lower duties is made to depend on prices impossible to take place in present times, and the duty on "Indian corn, barley, rye, and other inferior kinds of grain employed in making bread," was made fluctuating also, and declared to be one-fourth less per salm than "Egyptian wheat."

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\* So in the original.—G. M.

The price of wheat at that period was under 15 scudi per salm, and therefore the duty on wheat was 6 scudi per salm; so that this proclamation made the poorer classes immediately subject to a duty on barley and Indian corn of 4½ per salm.

The key to all this is, that the Government grain department, instead of only replacing its stock of wheat at certain times, had commenced interfering in the grain market, and thence the necessity of a duty to favour this secret monopoly, founded on the powerful pecuniary resources of the Government.

Thus the duty on the articles in question was continued until the new tariffs were published on the 8th December 1832; in consequence of the dispositions of which, the duty has continued ever since from 3½ scudi to 4½ scudi per salm by British vessels, and two shillings extra by foreign ones.

During the whole of the period embraced by the above detail, the circumstances of the Island were progressively declining, and therefore this last duty was as much felt as 5 scudi in 1819; and it drove many to great distress.

Saggina had ever been considered an article of food for animals; nay all animals consuming grain are not always found to eat it. The suffering inhabitants of Malta commenced consuming this article, and thus the food of animals became also in this instance the food of human beings. But the Argus eyes of the Government soon discovered this, and immediately considered it as an article fit for making bread with, and commenced charging on it the duty last above referred to.

The actual duty paid by this article is Sc. 5. 1. 4. per salm in foreign vessels.

This is the origin of the taxation of saggina. We now come to complain of this taxation as a commercial grievance.

A very great influx of very inferior qualities of wheat having taken place latterly in Malta, the prices of the market have been such as to supersede the necessity of the population at this moment having recourse to saggina, since the common lower bread, made of low wheat, barley, and Indian corn mixed, although full of husks, almost black, and a disgrace to the streets it is sold in, is of course preferred to that article.

Still, however, although we, holders of saggina, laid this before the Government, so jealous are they of the inhabitants getting hold of any article of food which can supply the place of taxed grains, that all our endeavours to obtain a remission of the duty under present circumstances were vain, as you will observe by the documents annexed. In order, therefore, that man may not eat the food of animals, animals themselves are deprived of their food. The shippers of the article are disgusted with Malta as a place of trade, and will lose at this present moment about thirty per cent in the article; and all this from the capricious obstinacy of the Government, who do not choose to see that

no human beings will ever eat saggina if by any means whatever they can obtain bread made of better materials.

Excuse the length at which we have troubled you, and permit us to recommend this matter to your best attention ; and believe us,

Dear Sir, very respectfully

Your friends and obedient servants,

(Signed) PAOLO EYNAUD.  
PASQUALE APAP.  
SAVERIO GIGLIO.

Formerly all the Government situations were occupied by the Maltese, the public Secretary excepted, of whom the first was a certain Mr. Macaulay, who acted also as Treasurer with a very moderate salary ; now, a good many of these situations, and particularly the principals of them, have gradually become occupied by Englishmen. In my pamphlet of July in the last year, I gave a comparison between the salaries and pensions enjoyed by 33 Englishmen and one Corsican, and those received by 34 Maltese of the highest rank and emoluments, and showed a difference of £10,000 per annum against the latter, exclusive of £5000 to the Lieut.-Governor, £2300 to the Audit Colonial Office, and £1600 to persons styling themselves Knights of St. John, resident or paid in England, all of which is not only exorbitant, but shameful ; as the resources of the Island are small and considerably reduced. The following are the situations taken by the right of the strong against the weak from the hands of the Maltese and conferred on Englishmen, some of which were formerly occupied under another denomination, viz., the offices of Chief Justice, Superintendent of Quarantine, Attorney-General, Collector of Land Revenue, Agent for the Grain Department, Superintendent of the Grain Department, Clerk of the same Department, Director of Public Works, Auditor of Accounts, First Assistant Secretary's Office, Magistrate of Gozo and Collector of Land Revenue, Collector of Customs and Excise, Superintendent of Marine Police, Magistrate of Executive Police, Lieut-Governor of Gozo, Superintendent of the Government Printing-

office, Superintendent of the Island Post-office, Clerk Secretary's Office, Adjutant of Police and Lieut. R. M. Fencibles (this latter contrary to Lord Bathurst's instructions to the Marquess of Hastings given on the 21st January 1825, that all the officers of that corps should be natives of Malta alone), Magistrate of Judicial Police, Secretary to the Lieut.-Governor of Gozo, Clerk Civil Hospital, Clerk to the Auditor of Accounts, Storekeeper, Head Master of Public Works, &c.; besides pensions granted to foreigners; while others have been refused to the Maltese.

If these acts are not enough to break the hearts of any people, I would say that such people are insensible, and deprived of common sense and reason. But the Maltese are not of this description. They are quiet, no doubt, but not ignorant of what has been going on during the last thirty-five years; and whoever thinks that he can do whatever he deems proper against them, or against their interests, because they are a patient, submissive, and peaceable people, is very much mistaken. The Maltese during all that time were not on a bed of roses, and they were making accurate observations, in so far as the acts were not concealed of what was going on in their Island. The Maltese are certainly a faithful and devoted people, very much attached to His Majesty's Crown and to the British nation; but at the same time they are attached to their country and to their interests. These are reflections that every Englishman should make, and the Maltese are confident that there is not one amongst them, except those that are interested in the monopoly of Malta, or in perpetuating the most oppressive system that ever existed, that would not deeply sympathize with them on the subject.

Having said enough on the Maltese grievances, their rights and their petitions, it only remains to me to say, that after thirty-five years of continual prayers, and of money expended by them, to obtain what ought to have

been granted them long since without hesitation, of continual trouble to get redress of their wrongs, and of deep disgust in seeing themselves treated worse than a conquered country; or rather as slaves; a most extraordinary and remarkable Council has at last been established in the Island of Malta. This Council is composed of seven members; four of whom are Englishmen, to assist and advise the Governor in the Government affairs of the Island, some appointed by the King and the rest by the Governor, and amongst the former is the Chief Secretary, and the Senior Military Officer. This Council so formed differs greatly from that which the Maltese have been expecting to receive from His Majesty, who in 1801 had promised the Maltese, through his representative Sir Charles Cameron, "the enjoyment of all their dearest rights." It is well to make mention here what these rights consist of. They consist in allowing them to be governed by their own laws and customs (conformably to the British constitution); in preserving their National Council composed of native Maltese, free and independent people; in respecting their Magistrates, or Municipal Bodies, and their Institutions; in leaving to them all the Government situations in the Island as formerly, with very few exceptions; in maintaining a free Port in the Island, so far as circumstances will admit of it; in fine, in giving them that liberty, which no one had a right to deprive them of, it having been enjoyed by them from the remotest times, then partly usurped during the time of the latter Grand Masters, acquired again by the Maltese through the most legitimate warfare against their oppressors, and through great sacrifices of Maltese blood and Maltese money; and again taken from them by their protectors, by those who promised their preservation! It is evident that a council composed as above stated, can neither please the Maltese, nor ever work to their interest and satisfaction. What could have been the cause of the unexpected failure of the ful-

filment of His Majesty's promise, the Maltese are at a loss to know. Have they given cause for such an alteration? Have they disobeyed in the least his commands? Have they not been always faithful and loyal subjects of His Crown? Has any one of them given the slightest proof of infidelity? Are they not still always well disposed towards and attached to this country, notwithstanding all the wrongs which they received from His Majesty's representatives?

On properly reflecting, however, on this subject, the Maltese conclude, that His Majesty's Ministers must have made a mistake in ordering the establishment of a Council so unpopular as the above in His Majesty's name. They must have forgotten to look back to former promises and stipulations. If it be a mistake, of which there is not the least doubt, it can be remedied, and I do not see why it should not be so without delay. Can the above Council be of any effectual utility to the Island in removing the abuses and mal-administration of its Government which we have already mentioned? Certainly not. It may, perhaps, make some slight and insignificant alterations; but these, it is to be understood, will never please the Maltese, and a population of 120,000 inhabitants in the centre of the Mediterranean should not be left discontented. It is neither policy nor justice that they should be left so, considering all their rights and their circumstances. Superficial change (such as took place last year in the removal of some trifling Custom-house and other duties to blind the eyes of the people) will not do for them, and they are decided never to abandon their rights. What would their children say if they were to sacrifice them by doing so? The present system may perhaps receive some more insignificant alterations; oppression may therefore still continue; but the Maltese are decided to persevere by all lawful means with their supplications. His Majesty's Ministers and the Parliament will again and again be applied to until a salutary



and a complete change be wrought on all the topics in question.

The present Lieut.-Governor, Sir Frederick Cavendish Ponsonby, is an excellent man; but he is surrounded by persons interested in maintaining and perpetuating the present unpopular system. His disposition, I have no doubt, is good; but he is placed in a very difficult position. If he wants to do good to the Maltese, he absolutely cannot, as our opponents will naturally prevent his doing so on account of their own interests. Our opponents in Malta are powerful in means and in influence, and their advice, or their proceedings, as interested people, can never be in favour of the Maltese. When a place becomes vacant, a great number of Englishmen besiege the Governor, surround him, and often prevail upon him, notwithstanding all his inclination in favour of the Maltese. To convince the reader more strongly of this truth, I have only to refer him to the following extract of a letter from a most respectable Englishman residing at Malta, to a friend of his in London, on introducing to him a very meritorious Maltese:—

His principal object in London (alluding to that Maltese) at present is to solicit a pension very well earned by a long course of public services, which I am sorry to say are but ill appreciated at Malta, when the Local Government has fallen under the influence of a few interested persons, who have no other view than to monopolize all the emoluments of office to themselves and their dependants.

The tariffs of 1832 were framed in Malta by the Government officers, the very persons who surround the Lieut.-Governor, and were sanctioned by His Majesty's Ministers. These tariffs were not only prejudicial to the people of Malta, but also to the British trade. A system of increasing the Revenue of the Island beyond what its resources can afford, to meet the heavy charges of the salaries and pensions of the Government persons, is a subject of just opprobrium. This is as clear as day light, and let any interested individual contradict it if he can. While

these people govern Malta, or remain in Malta occupying their present high stations, no satisfactory or salutary change in the administration of the Civil Government can be effected. As they are afraid of losing their situations, or of having their salaries diminished, they must oppose themselves, or at least use all their efforts to prevent our National Council being established, our municipal bodies and institutions being reinstated, our liberty restored, and a constitution and a press given us. Without reducing considerably the exorbitant salaries and pensions they enjoy, we cannot have a free port in Malta. The highest salary of any individual, when the English took possession of the fortifications; exclusive of the Public Secretary, did not exceed £200 per annum; now these salaries have been raised as high as £1500. Formerly these officers were all Maltese, now they are English. The resources of the Island at that time were very considerable, now they are reduced to a trifle; and out of this trifle a revenue of £100,000 is levied upon the people, by the power of the strong against the weak, and not by justice. Our opponents attempt to defend themselves by stating that their salaries are spent in Malta, and that therefore they cannot be of any prejudice to the Island. (How will this agree with the theory of Adam Smith, or with that of any other of equally sound judgment?) Against this frivolous assertion, or this lame excuse (as such, no doubt, it will appear to any Englishman), there are many reasons to bring forward; but I only limit myself to saying, that if the extravagant sums annually spent in salaries, pensions, and other superfluous charges for the benefit of foreigners, from the revenue of the much reduced and impoverished island of Malta, after allowing the necessary charges of the salaries of the Governor, Chief Secretary, &c. &c., were divided amongst the natives, it would be sufficient to support, employ, or withdraw from misery and starvation, 200 native families at least; or, as a preferable course, if we were to apply

these large sums thus saved by the abolition of these unnecessary salaries, pensions, and charges, to the relief of the inhabitants of Malta, by doing away with the Custom-house duties, the Quarantine and Port Dues, &c., which now so severely check the foreign trade of the Island; leaving only a moderate duty on Grain and the Excise, as recommended in my plan of reform annexed, the effect would be to encourage and augment the trade considerably, which would give employment to a great number of the inhabitants, and save from their sinking state the merchants of that Island. And this would not only be beneficial to the natives, but also to the British trade. It is also to be considered, that only a part of the above-mentioned sums is spent in Malta, the other part is spent on the Continent or in England; and some of the Government persons are frequently travelling and passing their time out of the Island. Not long ago, six of the principal amongst them were either in England, France, or Italy.

It would be tedious were I to enter into more particulars on this subject. What I have said is sufficient to show how affairs are carried on in Malta. Being desirous, however, that the British Government should afford a prompt remedy to the evils which surround us, on the 8th of September last year I presented to Lord Glenelg the following Plan of Reform, which I think will meet with the approbation of every Englishman, being the best adapted to the present times and the circumstances of our island, as well as to the British trade.

*Reform of the Civil Administration, Revenue, and Expenditure of the Government of Malta, conformably to the actual limited resources of that Island, its reduced Trade, and the small means of its Inhabitants, made on the most economical scale, without prejudice to the Mother Country. Recommended to the consideration of the British Government by George Mitrovich, a native of Malta.*

#### NATIONAL COUNCIL.

There should be established in the island of Malta a council, in which there should be a competent number of members elected by the people, such as it was intended formerly to establish for the good government of

the island, and the content and happiness of the Maltese, as well as their harmony and good understanding with the local authorities in that island. No taxes or duties should be levied, no laws should be enacted or altered, and no situations created or abolished, nor any thing else relating to the legislature of that island should be established, without the necessary discussions, debate, and deliberation of the said council, in which the governor must preside.

#### CONSTITUTION.

There should be a constitution framed, adapted to the preset times, and to the extreme wants of the Maltese, conformably to the liberal and just laws of Great Britain.

The codes that are now framing in Malta, it is generally expected, will not meet the wishes of the inhabitants, as the persons charged with that duty, five in number, are subservient to Government, and have a salary, so that, notwithstanding their ability and their undoubted probity, they are not at liberty to act as they would wish.

#### PRESS.

A moderate liberty of the press would be very useful to the Island, and the Maltese expect it from a liberal nation like the English. The progress of intellect must not be checked, particularly in the island of Malta, which has been so much neglected.

#### UNIVERSITY.

The University, so important an establishment for the education of youth, should be rendered entirely free as formerly, and be maintained by its own revenue, without imposing any tax on the students. Its property, now existing in the hands of the Government, should be restored and administered according to the dispositions of the National Council.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH.

An independent Board of Public Health should be established for the safety and security of the Island, as well as to render its proceedings more accredited on the Continent, for the benefit of the trade, and of travellers going from Malta to the ports of Europe. There should not be any civil officers admitted into the same, nor the governor himself, but all should be independent persons nominated by the council.

#### REVENUE.

On account of the depressed and deplorable state of the island of Malta, the present revenue of from 100,000*l.* to 110,000*l.*, is considered very heavy and quite impossible to be continued to be raised, the inhabitants being reduced to the lowest ebb of destitution and misery. To relieve the island as much as possible without prejudice to the Government of the Mother Country, the following reductions might be recommended.

The Revenue could be raised from only three branches, which are the most important in the Island, viz., Land Revenue, Excise on Wine and Spirits, and Duty on Foreign Grain. Every other imposition, as the

excise on transfer of landed property, the heavy fees and charges of the different tribunals, licenses, custom-house, ports, quarantine, and various other contingencies, should cease entirely, so as to render the place perfectly free, and its harbours open to the trade, without any restriction whatever, except the duties on the two heads above-mentioned, viz., Excise on Wine and Spirits, and Duty on Grain, which are very considerable, and heavy enough for the trade of Malta.

The production of these three branches may be calculated as follows.

*Land Revenue.*

Full and equitable rent for every individual, without distinction or partiality whatever, either civil officers, military, or inhabitants, taking advantage of every space of public property, without superfluity of expenses, either for repairs or accommodation to the Government officers. The whole, if well administered, together with various other receipts of different descriptions, would bring - - - - - £ 35,000

*Excise on Wine and Spirits.*

The actual duty on common wine is considered for Malta very heavy, this being the beverage of the poor, and as such, of the whole population, as every one is become poor (no beer is used on account of its high price); this should be reduced as much as possible, increasing that on superior wines, liquors, and spirits. The whole would produce - - - 15,000

*Grain.*

The present duty falls very heavy on the population, and a reduction cannot but justly be strongly recommended, bringing down the amount upon the whole revenue of this department (encouraging the English flag for the importation of Grain with a moderate difference in the duty) to - - 20,000

£ 70,000

With this amount, all the Civil Government expenses, and the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment, could be defrayed, without being of any weight to the Mother Country, provided the extravagant and insupportable salaries and high pensions, and other superfluous heavy charges which fall so hard upon the population, to the extreme disgust and annoyance of the Maltese, and which could be dispensed with without the least inconvenience to the Island, be discontinued.

*Expenditure.*

Governor, or Lieutenant-Governor, or acting Lieutenant-Governor, the title would be of no consequence for Malta, -	£ 3,000
Chief Secretary, - - - - -	800
Audit Colonial Office in England, - - - - -	700

Agent to reside in England for the Maltese, appointed by the National Council, - - - - -	500
Royal Malta Fencibles, - - - - -	11,000
Salaries of the Judges, Civil Officers, and other persons employed under Government, to be all Maltese as formerly, with very few exceptions, which would be but just, and what they are entitled to. The highest salary for any officer should not exceed £800, which is a fair allowance for a place like Malta, and for any family living with proper economy, where the rent, the living and every thing is very cheap, and would be cheaper if the price of bread be reduced according to the present statement. A wise measure would be to employ as many Maltese as possible, with moderate salaries, increasing those of a great many individuals that are employed under Government, whose salaries are not sufficient for daily subsistence; a tremendous contrast with those who enjoy a profusion of salaries, fixed by caprice or interest. The whole would be - - - - -	30,000
The remainder would be sufficient for the hospitals, charitable institutions, moderate pensions, and other contingencies,* -	24,000
	<hr/> £70,000 <hr/>

Any other elucidation required, could be furnished by the Author immediately, he being well informed and provided with documents respecting the Island of Malta, his native country.

If this reform be considered practicable, as there is every reason to hope it would be, being the most adapted for the present critical situation of the Island, the Maltese will be extremely gratified; the Government and the British Parliament will not be troubled with any more petitions from them, and the possession of Malta will be more secure than it is now in the hands of Great Britain; past oppression will be entirely forgotten, and the Maltese and the English will form only one body of people, attached to each other as brethren for ever, and ready to defend the Island to the last extremity, blessing the moment of having become so attached, and a new era of prosperity and happiness will commence from the very moment of the adoption of this reasonable plan.

London, 12th Aug., 1835.

Having also submitted to Lord Glenelg my pamphlet of last July, together with some letters on the Maltese

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\* But in case this sum should not be sufficient, the National Council would raise the deficiency by means less aggravating to the population, without affecting the trade, which, in the island of Malta particularly, should be encouraged as much as possible.

grievances, his Lordship was pleased to order an investigation, by the local authorities, to take place in the island of Malta; but the Maltese refused to appear before the authorities there, such an investigation (after mature consideration in a meeting called by them for that purpose) having been considered prejudicial to their cause, particularly as they have still in their recollection the circumstances that attended the commission of 1812, already mentioned. It is, indeed, a very delicate, perhaps a dangerous, task for the natives to appear before the authorities at Malta, as witnesses of facts against the administration of the Local Government. They have, therefore, come to the determination of carrying into execution their intention of making a formal appeal to the British nation, through her Parliament, by means of a petition signed by 2357 of the most respectable inhabitants of the island, including the clergy, lawyers, and nobles, an imposing number for a place like Malta. The following is the tenor of this moderate and respectful petition.

*To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled. The Petition of divers Inhabitants of the Island of Malta on behalf of themselves and their Countrymen,*

HUMBLY SHewETH,

That your petitioners and others did, in the month of July 1832, memorialize the King's Most Excellent Majesty, begging to lay at the foot of His throne their humble but earnest prayer for relief from the grievances which then, and still oppress them,

It pleased His Majesty most graciously to listen to the supplications of their distress; and in the view to afford relief, most beneficently to order the formation of a council to assist in the government of this island.

Your petitioners now beg to be allowed to trespass on your honourable House, by assuring them, that the Council which has been established cannot in any kind of way tend to relieve the deplorable and truly wretched condition of their island, it being incompetent in the principles of its formation with the peculiar wants of the inhabitants, and thus not replying to the intention of His Most Gracious Majesty.

Under these circumstances, your petitioners come forward to solicit the aid and support of your honourable and magnanimous House in Par-

liament assembled, to save a starving people from that desolation which threatens them.

It having pleased your honourable House, that the unfortunate situation in which the inhabitants of these possessions are plunged, and the causes which have led to such a state of affairs, should come under legislation in the early part of the next session; we beg briefly and most humbly to state what we consider these causes to be:

1st. The absence of a free representation of the wants of the people, which in our peculiar insular situation can only be made known through the medium of a municipal body, and which faculty of government we were despotically deprived of in the year 1818.

We next would refer to the disorders which have been, and are committing from the non-existence of any defined code of laws; and although it has been stated that relief on that head would shortly be bestowed, yet we nevertheless beg (considering our deplorable situation) that its succour may be hastened; and fondly trust, that on their publication they may be found adapted to the exigencies of the times, and the wants of the people; although we must confess to your honourable House, that the secrecy which has been adopted during their compilation and other attendant circumstances, induce us to be sceptical on this essential and vital subject.

A moderate liberty of the press would be very useful to this island, and we humbly beg it will be granted to us from the wisdom of your honourable House.

May we next be allowed to solicit the attention of your honourable Members towards the absence of a proper medium for improving and informing the minds of the people in this island; and that so far from their receiving light, they are kept in darkness from that instruction which is disseminated, not being consistent with the liberal and advanced progress made by the human mind in almost every part of the civilized world, and this we beg submissively to assure your honourable House proceeds essentially from the University of this island being under an inefficient and mercenary administration, although endowed by our ancestors; need we add that the inhabitants of our villages (or Casals) are altogether destitute of any means of elementary instruction; and this appears to your petitioners most unnatural when we consider, that we are under that magnanimous rule which loosened the chains from the slave, and disseminated throughout the world the light of knowledge.

With regard to the public health of the inhabitants of this island, we also beg to call for your honourable intervention. The Board of Health, as it is composed essentially by persons who receive salaries, we consider cannot act with that independence in the supporting of quarantine and other regulations which is consistent with the safety and prosperity of this island, particularly as regarding her relations with foreign countries.



Not the least important point which we should request to urge on the attention of your Honourable House is the declining, and indeed declined state of commerce in this island; and its export trade not being of any consideration, we humbly conceive that nothing would more tend to raise the inhabitants from their misery, than a declaration from your Honourable House of this port being free.

The heavy excise duty existing on common wine is most severely felt, it being the beverage of the labouring class; while that on spirits and superior quality wines is not by any means equivalent.

We further beg to solicit the attention of your Honourable Members, that from the year 1813, many public situations which were filled by native inhabitants have been curtailed, and some abolished, whereas emoluments or salaries of other appointments have been inordinately increased to the sacrifice and misery of many individuals.

But the most serious and heavy burden which we labour under, and for which we pray for relief, is the heavy duty on grain, the administration of which department is conducted by Englishmen receiving high salaries. We beg your Honourable House to believe that our grievances on this matter are of a very serious nature, and we humbly request, in your wisdom, that you may see the necessity of a native inhabitant or inhabitants of this island being engaged in the administration of this important department, should such arrangement be continued as at present.

We need not inform your Honourable and enlightened Members that there existed a Popular Council in this island; we therefore beg, that in your wisdom a similar medium may be granted to us, by which the people may possess a power to elect representatives for the object of stating their wants and preserving them in future against any infringement which may be attempted on their rights.

Unwilling further to trespass on the patience of your Honourable House, although there are existing several other grievances which we have not recapitulated; we will conclude this our Humble Petition in the firm persuasion that our prayer for redress will not be made in vain, and that the magnanimous feelings of the British nation will be conveyed to us in the legislative acts of their noble and honourable representatives whom we have now the honour of addressing.

With sentiments of the most profound respect we subscribe ourselves.

Malta, November 1, 1835.

(Signatures.)

The Maltese trust that this will be their last appeal, and hope that measures will be taken to remove their grievances, by establishing in their island a good and paternal government, in accordance with their rights, wishes and wants, and conformably to the British constitution. Further procrastination would only augment the evils, as the

people are quite tired of their sufferings, having been deprived of their liberty for these thirty-five years. By this alteration in the Civil Government of the island of Malta, England will not sustain any prejudice, will not suffer any injury whatever; on the contrary, by declaring Malta a free port, and establishing good laws, the British trade in the Mediterranean would obtain further advantages, and the people of the island would be rendered contented and happy. The London merchants themselves, interested in the trade of Malta, have made several applications to Government on this subject. But I fear that no permanent good can be effected in that unfortunate island, while it is continued under the control of persons who have learned lessons of despotism in the arbitrary and unpopular school of Sir Thomas Maitland, whose name remains in Malta, as that of one of our greatest oppressors. That extraordinary, though talented man, had power enough to do immense good to the Maltese; but regardless of all the promises of his predecessors, and of His Majesty himself, he took it upon him, I may say in a few words, to chain the Maltese, a faithful and confiding people, by the neck and leg. The people of England and His Majesty's Government are still in time to save the island from shipwreck; I therefore conclude by hoping that the Petition now before Parliament, will receive that support which the Maltese, as loyal subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, are entitled to, and expect.

Should any portion of the British public be indisposed to give full credit to what I have just stated, I refer all such with confidence to the several English authors who have written on the subject of the island of Malta. In my pamphlet of last year, I made mention of five of them, viz., Messrs. W. Eton, J. J. Dillon, C. W. Pasley, E. Blaquiére, and J. Webster, inserting at the same time some extracts from their respective works. And I can now add another, viz., Mr. R. M. Martin, who has recently written on the same subject, in his fifth volume of the

**History of the British Colonies, of which the following passage is worthy of insertion here.**

Malta is at present ruled by a military Governor, appointed by the Crown, and a Council has this year (1835) been added, the constitution of which is seven members, four of which must hold offices within the Island, namely, the Senior Officer in command for the time being (not in the administration of the Government); the Chief Justice; the Archbishop; and the Chief Secretary to Government. The three unofficial members of the Council are to be selected by the Governor; two from out of the chief landed proprietors and merchants, being His Majesty's native (Maltese) born subjects; and the third from among the principal merchants of the Island, being a British-born subject, and who shall have actually resided in the Island for a period of not less than two years. It is but just for me to state, that the Maltese (and also several British merchants) are dissatisfied with the constitution of this Council; they pray for the reconstruction of their Popular Assembly, which they had reorganised as soon as they had shut up the French in Valletta; and assert, with justice, that they have been more despotically treated by Great Britain (who, be it remembered, did not conquer them), than by any other Government under whose dominion the Island has been.

The most superficial statesman must perceive at a glance the importance of Malta to England; Gibraltar, it is true, is the key to the Mediterranean; but were we only in possession of the "Rock," the distance of our naval station from the seat of active commerce in Eastern Europe would be attended with very great disadvantages, to say nothing of the commercial emporium which Malta ought to become; in fact we have never yet considered the Island in its true light; it has been too much considered as a garrison or naval station, instead of a central dépôt for our merchandise; one of whose numerous shops or warehouses which our ancestors wisely established for the sale of British goods in different parts of the globe.

History proves that Malta, from the time of the Carthaginians upwards, owed the greatness which it exhibited at various periods, to its being a free port; and it has always declined when its commerce was checked by duties and restrictions, or when treated as a mere military post. Our Government has unfortunately been disposed to regard it in the latter light; the people are denied the exercise of political rights—free public discussion prohibited—military governors, military secretaries,\* and military officials,† abound—and little else is considered but

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\* I am given to understand that one of these gentlemen at Malta said, "We do not want merchants or traders here; they are troublesome gentry!"

† To such an extent has this been carried, that some time since, when

how the revenue may be augmented to the maintenance of salaries and patronage; for which purpose duties are imposed on trade which should, particularly in a place like Malta, be as free as air; while the quarantine duties imposed for general protection are levied on the goods and passengers arriving in the Island, instead of on the national treasury and local income. It is to be hoped that the impolicy of pursuing this pernicious system has been perceived, and that the removal of the duties from various articles imported into Malta, is but a prelude to the total annihilation of all customs and duties, the enactment of which in such a place is as barbarous as it is impolitic. The few merchants who have survived the wreck of so wretched a system (if system it can be called, which is without rule or reason) complain also, and strongly, of the frequent changing of the tariff; within a few years there have been three different schedules, so that no person can count on the stability of the laws which his property is subject to. The state of jurisprudence also, inciting as it does to constant litigation, is unfavourable to the successful prosecution of trade; while the poverty of the people, owing to heavy taxation, combined with a total absence of self-government, aided by a custom-house and quarantine duties, renders Malta one of the least prosperous possessions of the British Crown. It will cost England nothing to render Malta once more flourishing and happy;—let it be declared a totally free port (the quarantine expenses being levied out of the general taxes\*)—let a representative Assembly be given to the Maltese, with power, of course, to remedy the numerous existing abuses, and to revise the system of taxation now in force. By thus acting Malta may again become that for which nature designed it—the centre of an active commerce; its industrious, skilful, and peaceful inhabitants will carry British merchandise in small and large quantities where English ships would not think of proceeding, thus enriching themselves and benefiting us. We owe these boons, or rather let me call them *rights*, to the Maltese, who fought bravely for that political liberty which we so shamefully deprived them of, without having even the plea of conquest to justify our proceedings. I cannot here enter into a detail of the arguments by which the necessity for the adoption of these measures would be supported, they will be found in my “Colonial Policy,” chapters Government and Commerce; and I therefore conclude with

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Malta had an agent in England, a person arriving in London, and wishing to transact business with him, was told he must go down to Windsor, *as the agent for Malta was on duty there as a Cornet in the Dragoon Guards!*

\* It is surely quite hardship enough that an individual should be confined, and a merchant have his ship detained, and his goods rifled and fumigated, without demanding payment for what is deemed a public good; if it be so, let the public pay for it, and not the *detenus*.

expressing a hope that the Maltese will strenuously persevere in their endeavours to obtain a representative Assembly; and that the constituted authorities in England may see the wisdom of no longer considering Malta as a mere military fief, but as a valuable commercial depôt; and that its inhabitants may be admitted to those rights and privileges of British subjects, to which they have proved themselves so fully entitled.

In an article in *The Spectator* of the 23rd January last, I have noticed that the taxation in several of the British Colonies and other countries, is stated to be in the following proportion. In Ceylon, 8s. per head; in Lower Canada, 5s. 9d.; in Newfoundland (and the people are grumbling), 6s. 2d.; in the United States, 9s. 7d.; and in Prince Edward's Island, 4s. 3d.

Taking the whole revenue of the island of Malta, supposed to be 100,000*l.* on a population of 120,000 souls, the average would be 16s. 8d. per head. I could sincerely wish that Mr. R. W. Hay, when he was called as a witness on the 8th of May 1834, before the committee on the Colonial Military Expenditure, had answered that Malta, notwithstanding its small compass and its reduced resources, is taxed higher than any of the above-named countries, instead of rendering the following answer, given by him to the members.

He was asked, question 1608, "Are you aware of any complaints on the part of the Maltese, of the amount of taxation paid by them?" Answer, "No, I am not; properly speaking, they have no taxation at all; there are duties on articles of consumption and licenses, but there are no taxes whatever in the Island."

As to our complaints, there were at that time our petitions in the Colonial office to which reference might have been made.

Under the following heads are comprised a few of the most prominent grievances of which the Maltese complain; a perusal of which will, I am sure, satisfy the people of Great Britain as to the justice of their demands at her hands,

1. *Salaries.*

In order to afford an idea of the enormous difference made between the Maltese and the English in their salaries, the former having been superseded by the latter for no other reason but that they were Maltese, who have been treated as an inferior class of beings, and crushed by those who should have been their protectors, in the most shameful and oppressive manner, I have only to note a few, a very few, examples, by way of comparison, in illustration of this act of injustice, which will resound throughout all Europe, if redress be not satisfactorily granted.

*Administration of Public Property.*

<i>Maltese.</i>	<i>English.</i>
Formerly 4 Maltese at Sc.1200 each, and Sc.300 for their servants; together .....Sc.6000	One Collector .....Sc.8400

*Custom-House.*

A Collector, an old resident Englishman, with a wife and ten children, all Maltese ....Sc.1200 And some small fees besides.	A Collector .....Sc.5000 An increase in May last for having taken the Excise Office out of the hands of a Maltese, and the salaries of 6 public weighers also Maltese .....Sc.1200
	Sc.6200

*Courts of Justice.*

President, formerly Sc.2500, and afterwards increased to ..Sc.5000	Chief-Justice, .....Sc.15,000
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*Quarantine Department.*

Three Commissaries, respectable persons.	A Superintendent .....Sc.9600
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And so on through all the other departments.

## 2. *Contributions, or Forced Loans.*

The French, during the blockade of Valletta, pressed by circumstances, were obliged to cause the people within the fortifications to furnish them with a great quantity of different-articles, consisting principally of cotton, cloth, linen, &c., and likewise a large sum in cash, the whole of which amounted, as it is stated, to about one million and a half of francs (this sum, however, has not been exactly ascertained) ; this was against the tenor of the capitulation between them, the order, and the Maltese.

After the general peace (1814), the Maltese applied to the French Government, claiming the amount of their credits according to their respective documents, but they were told that the French Government had settled all claims with the English Government, and that they had nothing to do but to refer them to this country, for the adjustment of their demands. The Maltese consequently made application accordingly, but to the present day no payment whatever has been made to them.

It is to be remarked in the first place, that, if the Maltese had been allowed to take part in the capitulation of 1800, they would have compelled the French to give security for the extinction of their debts, and it is proper to say that the French were ready to do so, if General Pigot had taken a little care, as he ought to have done, to secure the interests, in this respect, of the Maltese.

Excluded, as I have stated, from the above-mentioned capitulation, the English naturally became responsible for all the losses sustained by the Maltese during the blockade, which they might otherwise have recovered on the occasion of the capitulation.

If this argument is not agreeable to the feeling of those individuals who may be indisposed to grant any thing to the Maltese, because they are weak (and the weak are generally sacrificed by the strong), there is another argument which may be brought forward equally convincing.

In the treaty of the 25th April 1818, between the

French Government and the Allied Powers, France bound herself to pay to Great Britain her claims for the damage suffered by all British subjects in the last war. The British Government was aware of the losses sustained by the Maltese, as strong remonstrances were made by them in their memorial to the King in 1801; therefore, we have reason to believe that if we were neglected and sacrificed in the capitulation, we ought not to have been abandoned in the above-named treaty.

### 3. *Maltese Credits on Hompesch.*

The last Grand Master of the Order of St. John, Ferd. Hompesch, having contracted many debts amongst the Maltese inhabitants at his elevation to the Grand Mastership, when the Order was expelled from the Island in June 1798, delegated the French Government to pay to his creditors 300,000 francs out of the sum allowed to him by the French, according to the 2nd article of the Capitulation, under which the Grand Master and the Order had surrendered the Island to them.

General Bonaparte, in fulfilment of the above delegation, ordered that landed property situated in Valletta to the above amount, should be assigned to the creditors of Hompesch, in payment of their respective credits. In consequence of that order, the French Government of Malta, on the 29th Thermidor, in the 6th year of the Republic, transferred in due and legal form several lots of landed property, valued at twenty years purchase (the fair price at that time), to the creditors of Hompesch, amounting to 299,904 francs, and 96 francs in cash.

Since Malta has been in the possession of Great Britain, the creditors have been deprived of the property allotted to them as above, and this has been done in opposition to the tenor of the Capitulation between the French and the British in 1800.

The French having acquired by force of arms the property of the Order of St. John, they became absolute



masters of that property, and of course had a right to dispose of it in such manner as they thought fit, in like manner as they disposed of the plate and jewellery of that Order, which they carried away from the Island, and the possession of which no one dared to dispute with them; they therefore had a right to assign landed property to pay a debt for which they had bound themselves in a legal treaty. This subject, likewise, demands attention from His Majesty's Government.

#### 4. *Università of Valletta.*

This establishment, formerly conducted by four Maltese under the title of *Giurati*, had the charge of furnishing the Island with corn. It used to take on interest the funds necessary for that purpose from private individuals, or from pious institutions. Since the losses sustained by the Order after the Revolution of France, the *Università* supplied the Order with occasional sums during the financial pressure, and consequently it was obliged to borrow more funds at 5 and 6 per cent. from the inhabitants. On the French taking possession of the Island, there were about forty thousand *salm*s of wheat (a *salm* is about one English quarter) in its granaries, besides a quantity of barley and oil. The value of this stock, however, did not cover the debts of the *Università*. The French having consumed or appropriated to themselves the whole produce of this supply during the blockade, they were ready to give security not only for the amount of it, but also for the enforced loans and spoliations committed by them during that war. Having unfortunately been allowed to evacuate the Island without the concurrence of the Maltese in the capitulation, the Maltese were prevented from availing themselves of that favourable opportunity.

Sir Alexander Ball in 1805, in order to appease in some measure the complaints of the many interested people, levied an excise duty on wine and liquors, pro-

missing that its amount should defray the payment of two and a half per cent. interest, fixed by him, to private individual creditors; excluding the credits of all the pious and other corporations. Three kinds of injustice are to be perceived in this despotic measure of Sir Alexander; 1st, The levying means of paying interest upon the victorious people for the debt left by the vanquished; 2nd, The low rate of interest allowed upon sums lent at a legal one of twice that amount, when the whole amount of the debt, £300,000, might have been paid to the creditors, partly by the French, and partly from the landed property of the Order, both of whom had appropriated the funds of that institution; and, 3rdly, The unlawful exclusion of the greater part of the creditors from participating with the others.

At the expulsion of the Order from Malta, the Università had a right to claim from the property left behind by it, the payment of those sums which the Università had supplied to the Order; and the French, taking possession by conquest of the landed property of the Order, were bound to acknowledge the debt to which that property was subjected; and, therefore, they themselves became debtors for that sum to the Università, as in their capitulation with the Order the Maltese property was declared inviolable. The French having, besides, consumed the stock belonging to that institution, they became also debtors for its value, for which the Maltese would have constrained them to pay, or give security for the payment, if they had been allowed to concur in the capitulation with the British. The Maltese not having obtained payment, they have a right to claim from the landed property which the French left behind in the Island, taken by them from the Order. The present Government having appropriated the landed property in question, not by conquest nor by any other legal title, but by taking possession as protectors, the Maltese have a right to claim from that property their credits; consequently, if the Govern-

ment chooses to keep the property in question, it ought at least to acknowledge the total debt to which it is subjected, or release to the creditors the property itself.

If we examine the injustice of not paying the full interest to the creditors upon the whole debt in another point of view, we find that, even supposing that the establishment of a duty levied upon the population for the payment of the interest in question was just, the amount of this duty might pay the original full interest of 5 or 6 per  $\frac{1}{2}$  not only to those who actually receive only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per  $\frac{1}{2}$ , but also to those who have been unjustly excluded: therefore from whatever side one may look at the right in question, it will be found that nothing but a shameful despotic injustice deprives the creditors of the full payment due to them.

### 5. *Public Health,*

For want of proper regulations and an independent Board in the Island, we have had the plague in 1813, and the small-pox in 1830; the former carried off 4668 persons; and of the latter out of 8000 persons that were attacked, 1170 died, besides a considerable number of unhappy creatures who remained horribly defaced, and many others who became blind.

The people in Malta are always trembling for their safety on account of the obstinacy of the Government in not allowing an independent Board to be established to regulate the affairs of the quarantine department, instead of leaving it, as it is, under the control and to the caprice of the military men that govern the Island.

Such cruel proceedings deserve, certainly, the immediate interference of the Legislature of this country.

An independent Board will not only prove beneficial to the security of the public health, but also to the trade of the Island, and to travellers going from Malta to the ports of Europe, as more confidence will be placed in it by the deputations in the different lazarettoes on the Continent,

than at present, when the members are subservient to Government, and the Governor himself is the head.

#### 6. *The University of Literature.*

Under a judicious government, education is, no doubt, one of the most important considerations; but in the island of Malta, it seems to have been, for some time, the least encouraged, not to say checked, by the local arrangements. There has existed in Malta, for a considerable time, a public college for the education of youth, free of expense. The teachers were formerly Jesuits, endowed by the Maltese with a considerable patrimony for their support. After their suppression in 1769, the instruction was continued by learned teachers paid from the funds appertaining to that monastic order. The landed revenues were incorporated with those of the Government, and the youth attending the schools have been compelled to pay a monthly contribution even for the months of vacation, during which they receive none of the benefits of instruction. We consider that if the accounts of the revenue and expenditure of this institution were to be kept separate, as they should be, from the general accounts of the Government, and to be separately administered, there would certainly have been no necessity for levying any tax upon education.

#### 7. *Monte di Pietà.*

This national institution exists in Malta to the present day, and its object is to lend money upon pledges. It possesses a considerable revenue to meet the charge of salaries and other expenses incurred in conducting it.

During the time of the Order the interest charged by this institution was from 3 to 4½ per cent.; but this interest having been raised to 6 per cent. by the French was one of the causes which irritated the people against them. Notwithstanding which, after the surrender of Valletta, the latter interest was continued by the British

Government, and remains to the present day; and with respect to the revenue of the institution, with the exception of an allowance annually given in support of the House of Industry, the public is totally ignorant of its employment, notwithstanding that it is a national institution, whose conductors ought to inform the people of all its operations.

The remarkable capitulation of 1800 prevented the Maltese from claiming nearly one million of francs, the amount of property in gold, silver, and jewellery, sold from this institution by the French Government during the blockade. The Maltese are extremely thankful to General Pigot (who excluded them from that capitulation) for this act of friendship and protectorship !

### 8. *The Press.*

The Maltese have been praying His Majesty's Government for a free press (not licentious nor offensive to religion) in the Island for these thirty-five years, and why it has not as yet been granted to them, they are at a loss to know. It is to be remarked that there exist in the Island two private printing establishments in English hands, namely, one belonging to the Commissariat, and the other to the agent of some Missionary Societies. Now, the Maltese ask why liberty is granted to some and not to others. Let those persons who oppose themselves so strongly to the good of the Maltese show the conditions under which the Island was placed by them under the British protection. If there is any clause by which such persons can show that the Maltese are to be considered inferior to the English, and as such to be treated in a different manner, then the Maltese will relinquish their demands; but if, on the contrary, in all the stipulations and promises, liberty was always the main object, and solemnly secured to them by proclamations in His Majesty's name, why, then, is such a difference made between the two?

### 9. *Nunnery of St. Mary Magdalene.*

The property of this Nunnery, and some other funds of a similar nature, through a notification of the Government of Malta, dated 13th March 1830, have been placed at the disposal of Government.

This is a flagrant usurpation of the rights of property. We do not know by what authority it was placed at the disposal of Government, but it is certain that with regard to a part of the property in question, viz., that of the Nunnery of the Magdalene, although the Convent of those nuns was forcibly occupied by the French, and never restored by the English, the nuns still resided in another convent called St. Catherine's, and in succession as one of them died another was admitted; so that the property in question belonged to a living society of women, whose nunnery in the above document is said to be suppressed. The Maltese never concurred in such a suppression, and when this happened, it caused in the Island the greatest sensation amongst the inhabitants, since the sacred property of individuals is thus insecure, and at the caprice of military officers exercising a power over the Maltese equal to that of the late Dey of Algiers.

### 10. *The Sanctuary called "San Calcedonio, or Casa Santa."*

That part of the building, a sanctuary, styled as above, situated at Floriane, which the British officers arbitrarily converted into a military hospital in spite of all the efforts and entreaties of the Maltese to prevent such proceedings on the part of the Government, should be restored.

This is a place consecrated by their forefathers to the exercise of especial devotion. The Maltese complained bitterly of this act, and many persons offered to surrender their own houses on condition that such a place might be respected and not taken out of their hands for profane purposes.

This was one of the points complained of in their petition of 1811 to His Majesty.

The few sick men that are in the above arbitrarily and unjustly converted Sanctuary, could easily be removed to the general Hospital in Valletta, where there is sufficient room for the sick of the whole garrison.

It is very oppressive and extremely impolitic that any interference should take place on the part of the Local Government with the Maltese in that which relates to their worship or to their ecclesiastical establishment, to which they are particularly attached. The Maltese, in addition to the above, and the suppression of the Magdalene Nunnery, have other strong reasons to complain of this unpopular interference, shown on many occasions, to the great dissatisfaction of the whole population.

I hope that the Legislature of this country will give positive orders for the strict observance of former instructions given to His Majesty's Representatives, and communicated by them to the Maltese, on different occasions, relating to a subject so important and so delicate amongst the people of Malta.

### *Calumnies on the Maltese.*

#### ROYAL REGIMENT OF MALTA.

The enemies of the Maltese have hitherto triumphed over them, by representing them not only quite opposite to what they really are, but also by grossly and shamefully calumniating them with respect to their bravery, ability, and character.

The Maltese, deprived unfortunately of the liberty of the press, are prevented from making known, publicly, their sentiments from their own island, and therefore they must apply to this country, in order to promulgate any thing which they think should be made known to the public.

One or two articles having lately appeared in a newspaper published in this metropolis, calumniating the Royal Regiment of Malta, the officers of that regiment, viz., Capt. Mitrovich (my father), Capt. Busett, Lieut. Tre-

visan, and Lieut. Pajas and others, as well as myself, cannot but express the greatest surprise at the conduct of the person (who subscribed himself to the articles "Sentinel"), in publishing a falsehood of the greatest magnitude, to the prejudice of a whole regiment, which has served with the British army, and has behaved always honourably and to the satisfaction of its commanders.

The following is the true version of the affair of Capri, on account of which the regiment was calumniated. The British public may depend on the correctness of the facts, of which I was an eye-witness.

If the calumniator, out of malignity, denies or contradicts the statement here made, there are proofs in existence which will convince him, or any one else, of its veracity. There are still living Lieut.-Col. Cowell, and Major De Haviland, who served with the rank of captain in that regiment, and who can also give a correct account of that affair.

The Royal Regiment of Malta, about 950 strong, left Malta on the 10th November 1807, under the command of Major Meade, to join the army in Sicily. About ten months afterwards, on their passage from Sicily to the island of Capri, they landed at Diamante, on the coast of Upper Calabria, and there captured a convoy belonging to the enemy of thirty-eight richly-laden small vessels and four gun-boats. This so enraged Murat, that on the 4th of October 1808, a few days after the arrival of the regiment at Capri, that island was attacked by an expedition conveying a body of troops, amounting to 6000 men, under Gen. Lamarque, who succeeded in taking possession of the island, and making prisoners of war the greater part of the regiment. I deem it proper, upon the assurance also of respectable officers, impartial eye-witnesses not natives of Malta, to declare, in as far as regards the men, that they behaved most gallantly, and that they gave the fullest satisfaction to all the officers commanding them, English, German, and Maltese; and if the opinion of the



majority of the officers had been acted upon, the regiment would have taken or destroyed all the enemy's troops that had effected a landing. These had landed on the narrow and enclosed beach of Damacuta, and had there sheltered themselves, under some rocks, from the fire of the Maltese; but the commanding officer of the regiment, Major Hamill (Lieut.-Col. Sir John Pringle Dalrymple and Major Meade being absent on leave), fearing the loss of many of his men by the heavy cannonading to which the Maltese would have been exposed from the enemy's armed vessels (consisting of a frigate, a corvette, another vessel, and about thirty gun-boats and mortar-boats), opposed the general opinion of the officers and the ardent desire of the men themselves, demonstrated by loud and oft-repeated huzzas, and would not allow even a single detachment to move forward from the position which he had selected, to a place from which the enemy might have been attacked in the narrow and rocky position occupied by them at that moment, so that they would have been obliged either to re-embark under a heavy fire of musketry from the Malta Regiment, opening upon them as soon as they should move, or they must have surrendered at discretion. This I state upon the public avowal of some of the French officers to some of the German and Maltese officers, while at the hospital at Naples, after the taking of Capri, when they themselves confessed to having lost 800 men on their landing. It was also another error of inexperience on the part of Major Hamill, to leave the regiment scattered and divided in many detachments all along the position, which he had originally occupied to oppose the landing, and to allow them to remain so until long after dark; he ought to have collected all his men, and posted them on the way by which the enemy might have advanced in force, leaving a detachment in another place called Limbo, wherefrom to check the enemy's troops which might have attempted to land in that direction. The consequence of this inadvertence was, that when the enemy

advanced from that sheltered position, under the obscurity of the night, they had time to occupy an open ground, and there collect their greatest force in columns, by the weight of which they attacked, one after the other, the several Maltese detachments, scattered as above mentioned. The Major's want of experience caused the loss of the greater part of the regiment and the sacrifice of his own life. He was however venerated, and his memory is still cherished by the Maltese, who, far from attaching any stigma to the Major, still assert that too great a care for his men, a want of knowledge of the localities, from having been only a few days in the Island, and inexperience much to be regretted, produced the unhappy consequences. The neglect of supplying the Maltese with ammunition from the depot in the town of Capri, under the charge of Lieutenant-Colonel Lowe, contributed also to the untoward result; at sun-set the greater part of the Maltese were without a cartridge, and, although message after message was sent to the dépôt for a supply of ammunition, none was sent. Two companies of the Corsican rangers, who had joined the Maltese in the early part of the landing, retreated (when they saw the Maltese detachments overpowered on the advance of the French during the night) to an eminence called Monte Solaro, where there was an uncompleted redoubt, without any artillery, ammunition, provisions (except indeed two barrels of salt meat, four bags of biscuit, and one small cask of brandy), or water. Soon afterwards, about 250 Maltese sought also the same place; but after midnight, the two companies of the Corsicans being acquainted with the localities, retired through precipices and passes to the garrison of the town of Capri, where the remainder of the Corsican regiment under Lieut.-Col. Hudson Lowe was quartered, leaving the 250 Maltese to their fate; who, unacquainted with the precipices and passes, and not knowing the retreat of the Corsicans, remained in that defenceless place until the following day,

when they necessarily surrendered to the enemy. About seventy-five of the Maltese and two officers (including Major Hamill) were killed, and 120, including one officer, wounded.

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FROM the foregoing details the British nation will see a complete history or series of misrule, breach of faith, ingratitude, and injustice. The Maltese gave their Island to Great Britain, and not to Civil Commissioners, Governors, Lieut.-Governors, Generals, Colonels, Lieut.-Colonels, Military Secretaries, and military and other officials.

The Maltese therefore appeal to Great Britain for redress, and for the justice to which they are entitled at her hands. Of this they feel assured, that when the British public shall have been made acquainted with the heavy wrongs which their fellow subjects, the Maltese, have thus endured, redress and justice will be withheld no longer, and that freedom will be permanently restored to a devoted, faithful, and loyal people.













